University of Alberta

Towards a New Borderland in Teacher Education for Diversity: A Narrative Inquiry into Preservice Teachers' Shifting Identities Through Service Learning

by

©

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to my family,

my parents,

who taught me to value my own roots

and to be open to others,

my husband and our family,

who taught me to attend to others in new ways,

especially my son,

an ongoing source of inspiration for this work.

ABSTRACT

Given the growing demographic gap between a largely homogeneous preservice teacher population and an increasingly diverse student population, prospective teachers need to become familiar with both cultures of difference and the ways they live in relation to them. This narrative inquiry explores four preservice teachers' personal practical knowledge of diversity and the ways this storied knowledge was restoried through a community-based service learning engagement. Through this study, I came to understand how teacher identities (stories to live by) are shaped and can be reshaped.

This inquiry was grounded in three beliefs. First, teacher and student lives are central to the curriculum of teacher education. Second, learning about diversity requires attention to teachers' personal practical knowledge of diversity. Finally, working in relationship and over time, individuals' storied knowledge can be restoried.

In this study, I structured a service learning engagement which recognized participants' stories to live by as situated within the temporal context of a life experience. Participants' past experiences were first explored to understand how they composed their stories to live by. With a view to interrupting their storied knowledge, I involved participants in volunteer work with children in after-school clubs located in culturally diverse and socially disenfranchised communities. The after-school settings provided opportunities to connect with children's out of school experiences. While states of disequilibrium are important to engage the kind of reflection required to focus attention on individuals' stories to live by, preservice teachers need safe relational spaces in which to explore their personal practical knowledge about diversity. Such spaces provide support for the telling, retelling, and reliving of preservice teachers' stories to live by in relation to diversity.

Using a concept of dispositioning participants' knowledge, I inquired into shifts in participants' personal practical knowledge. Four key considerations emerged: learning about diversity begins with experience, occurs in dispositioning contexts, occurs through relationship and occurs through reflection over time. Inquiry-based service learning in the community within a reconceptualized teacher education curriculum for diversity opens possible borderland spaces within which preservice teachers can engage in learning through collaborative, on-going reflection on experience, for their own and future learners' benefit.

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CHAPTER 1[1]: NARRATIVE BEGINNINGS

I have always been interested in diversity. My interest in it is rooted in early family experiences. While I was born and raised in Edmonton, Alberta, both my parents were originally from Quebec. My father was born in Montreal and had family roots in Knowlton, a bilingual town in the Eastern Townships of Quebec. My mother, third youngest of 12 children, grew up in La Patrie, a unilingual French town less than 30 minutes from Knowlton. Around my father's 11th birthday, he and my widowed grandmother moved to Jasper, Alberta, where the Depression was not being felt as severely as it was in larger urban centres. He was schooled in Edmonton and eventually attended university in Ottawa. While there, he met my mother who was studying to become a nurse. Following a five-year, cross-country courtship, they married and settled in Edmonton. French was their common language and so, as the middle of five children, I was raised speaking French at home and English outside the home.

Growing Up on a Border

Early on, I was sensitive to being different. As a child, I recall how often my name was mispronounced and how frequently my mother was asked to spell and re-spell our last name when identifying herself or placing an order by telephone. People overhearing me speak French to my siblings would often remark:

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[1] Note to reader: The reader will notice alternating fonts throughout this first chapter. I have adopted a traditional font to represent a narrative account of my experience of coming to know about diversity. This narrative is interrupted throughout by italicized text that is intended to reflect the theoretical underpinnings that inform my thinking around this experience. The alternating font is intended to reflect a conversation between lived experience and theory as a way of bringing meaning to lived experience. Alternatively, the reader may choose to omit the theoretical components and read the text as an uninterrupted narrative.

- Is that French?
- Yes.
- Oh. Where are you from?
- I'm from here.
- No. I mean, where are you *really* from?
- Here, I was born and raised *here*.
- No kidding! So, is that Quebecois French or Parisian French you're speaking?

Exchanges such as these were constant reminders of my difference. And while I should perhaps have been more appreciative of the interest people were showing for my origins, their attempts to *place* me made me feel like an outsider.

If I was a curiosity for Anglophones, I was also somewhat anomalous within the local Francophone community. I can think of two reasons for this. As a first-generation member of my family born in Alberta, my accent was different; when I opened my mouth to speak French, people still assumed I was from somewhere else. Secondly, unlike many Franco-Albertans whose families had settled here at the turn of the century, all but two members of my extended family lived in Quebec. To this day, I think of myself as French-Canadian, even though Franco-Albertan has become a more commonly used term in my community. My father has always referred to himself in this way. Perhaps choosing to do the same was my way of preserving connection to family and French-speaking communities outside my province.

While I recall feeling different within both Anglophone and Francophone communities, I enjoyed the freedom of occupying different cultural locations simultaneously. In my home, school, and church communities, I had my French identity. Outside of those settings, I had neighbourhood friends with whom I socialized in English. Fluent in both languages from an early age, I moved with ease between cultures.

> *Bhabha (1994) helps me reflect on the process of living in the space of overlap between two cultures. In describing culture as a complex site of negotiation, he draws attention to the interaction that emerges at the boundaries between two cultures. The place of overlap, referred to as the interstitial or liminal space, becomes a third cultural space where a hybrid identity is shaped on both conscious and unconscious levels. He describes this liminal space as a place of tension and does not understand hybridity as some happy consensual mix. His theory was helpful in understanding my sense of identity, both personally and collectively. On a personal level, it helped me address my own tensions and wonderings in respect of my own identity as being similar, yet different from my parents in light of the increased heterogeneity of my home environment. On a collective level, it helped me problematize official multiculturalism in Canada. While terms like cultural diversity, pluralism, and multiculturalism might paint the picture of a tolerant society where all differences are accommodated, I began to appreciate the realities of diaspora as I face the challenge of negotiating an identity as a Francophone in Western Canada. I also find Bhaba's work useful in the context of our Francophone community's current process of negotiating a new collective identity to reflect its increasingly multicultural character.*

Growing up bilingual and living between cultures brought both opportunity and challenge. I remember as a child thinking how lucky my friends were to walk to the neighbourhood school while I attended a French-language convent school across the city. Later, I remember feeling the political impact of the National Energy Program. As the daughter of staunch supporters of Pierre Elliot Trudeau, I remember being challenged on the value of official bilingualism and of maintaining a federation that included Quebec. No matter the venue or the context, it seemed that I often had to justify my place as a French Canadian living in Alberta and my vision of a Canada that included Quebec.

Looking back, I wonder whether my sensitivity to this socio-political context lay behind my decision to become a French Immersion teacher. While I was always interested in languages, I think what fascinated me more were the differences I noticed at the point of contact between languages. Why, for example, when an Anglophone has a frog in his or her throat does a Francophone have a cat? (*J'ai un chat dans la gorge*.) I was fascinated that a common idea could conjure up such different images in each language. Perhaps these early noticings laid a foundation for my interest in contrastive analysis and, as a French Immersion teacher, I loved helping my Anglophone students explore the idiosyncrasies of the French language…like the fact that a table leg in French is given a female gender (*une patte*) while a sofa is masculine (*un sofa*). How could I ever hope to explain why a table leg should be considered more feminine than a sofa? And once my students had come to accept gender as a given in this new language, how could I then expect them to put all gender considerations aside and learn to refer to both women *and* men as '*une personne*'? Despite these challenges, I always found enjoyment exploring linguistic and cultural differences with my students. In retrospect, I think my career choice was probably fuelled less by an interest in teaching language, and more by an interest in building bridges across languages and, in so doing, across cultures.

> *Hoffman (1989) provides insight into the nature of language and its critical connections to personal identity. In her memoir of exile,* Lost in Translation, *she relates her struggle to reconcile the voices within her with each other. Perhaps in choosing to become a second language teacher, I was finding a way to build understanding between two cultures and in so doing, to create a common place of acceptance within and for myself.*

A View from the Classroom Threshold

One of the best pieces of advice I received in my preservice education program was to stand at the classroom door and greet students as they entered. As I look back over my years of teaching, I recognize that the threshold became a very important and educative place for me. I learned to hover on this point of contact between children's lives in and out of school and in so doing, to attend to the importance of children's personal and social lives and the way these realities affect their lives in school.

The classroom threshold offered a vantage point from which I could observe my students' social interactions in the hall; I was aware that whatever happened at recess was bound to affect the academic and social interaction in my classroom afterward. I wondered how children could be expected to flick a switch and turn off whatever might be happening in their social or family life in order to concentrate in class. Indeed, social issues often spilled over into the classroom. I suspected that for every conflict that came to my attention, there were many more tensions simmering just below the surface; these were often the most harmful, particularly to those children who were more vulnerable. In response to this, I posted an envelope at the back of my room and called it the "Au Secours" envelope. It became the drop-off point for *Chère Madame* letters which students wrote anonymously to ask for help in solving problems. On a weekly basis, sometimes sooner at a student's request, I would read the notes aloud and engage the class in discussion. Together, we identified issues, shared similar experiences, and brainstormed solutions. While the exercise was primarily intended to help the student in need, I noticed that students were learning to solve problems proactively together. The

Au Secours activity was creating a sense of community in the classroom—students felt heard, safe, and secure in an environment where both their academic and social needs were valued. I noticed with time how they began to look out for each other and even began bringing to our collective attention problems or social issues they noticed outside the classroom. Anonymity seemed to matter less as time went on. As I reflect back on this process, I think what it taught me was the connection between having a sense of belonging and being able to grow and learn. This was particularly important to students learning in a second language because their daily interactions involved reaching past the familiar in order to take risks. And while our Au Secours discussions fell beyond the borders of any subject area in the prescribed curriculum, their socio-affective focus remained at the heart of my own curriculum.

> *Heilbrun (1999) speaks of hovering on the threshold. I find this metaphor useful in describing the work that was happening in the liminal space between the academic and social lives of children at school. She also speaks of "choosing the threshold over societal confirmation" (p. 101). While it was time-consuming to bring social concerns over into the academic domain and while the discussions may not have tied back to any specific curricular outcome, there was something inherently rewarding in the collective experience of Au Secours. It allowed us to pay attention to the socio-affective context of our learning community aiming for everyone to feel a sense of belonging to it. Noddings' (1993) notion of an ethic of care is also meaningful to me. She believes teachers need to engage in conversation and dialogue in schools in order to hear more clearly what their students are going through and students need to do the same with those outside their exclusive group. This kind of dialogue aimed at understanding can guide students toward morally sensitive lives. She argues that learning to engage in moral dialogue is essential to a fully human existence and schools should take seriously their obligation to help students in this learning.*

A View from the Teacher Education Threshold

I think of field experiences as the meeting point between teacher education and the real world of teaching. It is also a meeting point between a university-based teacher education culture focused on theoretical knowledge and a school-based teacher education culture focused on practical knowledge. The three years I spent coordinating field experience placements and supervising student teachers at Faculté[2] Saint-Jean provided me with another border-crossing experience.

In my experience, student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university facilitators often brought very different expectations to the practicum experience. Student teachers sometimes struggled with the lack of latitude afforded by cooperating teachers for trying out new ideas, while cooperating teachers often struggled with what they perceived to be student teachers' lack of initiative or ability to plan, manage, and cover curriculum in an efficient manner. As a university facilitator, I often felt caught in the spaces of silence created by these unexpressed frustrations. Too often, conversation would happen privately, with each party asking me to bring his or her concerns to the other's attention.

> *Britzman (1986) explores the apprenticeship model that is often the basis for teacher education programs. Within this structure, preservice teachers are first trained in the theories of teaching in university contexts and then move to hands-on, in-classroom settings where they learn to imitate classroom practices of expert teachers. Competency is often framed as effective use of classroom management techniques. In this apprenticeship model of teacher education, the uniqueness of individuals, situations, and contexts are ignored and, instead, a*

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[2] In 2005, Faculté Saint-Jean of the University of Alberta was rebranded Campus Saint-Jean to reflect its distinct campus and French-language course offerings across many fields of study. As my involvement there preceded the name change, I will refer to it as Faculté Saint-Jean throughout this dissertation.

> *story of teacher as "rugged individualist" emerges as "the social problem of becoming a teacher is reduced to an individual struggle" (p. 442).*

I often found myself mediating student and teacher expectations, hoping to build a sense of shared purpose. Sometimes, however, tensions would escalate to such a point that the student, cooperating teacher, and I would resolve to make the best of a difficult situation. In such instances, I felt the practicum was reduced to a matter of *putting in time* with the student trying to imitate the cooperating teacher's ways in order to obtain a passing grade. I wondered about how I was contributing to the replication rather than the evolution of practice. This created tension in me.

> *Clandinin and Connelly (1995) use the metaphor of the professional knowledge landscape as positioned at "the interface of theory and practice in teachers' lives"(p. 4). They believe that moving between the more private in-classroom spaces and more public out-of-classroom spaces creates epistemological and moral dilemmas for teachers which they understand narratively in terms of secret, sacred, and cover stories. By its nature, the practicum experience seems to highlight these dilemmas and create, for both student teacher and cooperating teacher, an uneasy professional environment. As the student teacher enters the in-classroom place of the teacher, he/she shifts it, by his/her presence, to an out-of-classroom place. In this space, both student teacher and cooperating teacher feel displaced. Further displacement occurs when the university facilitator drops in for scheduled visits. As a result, the practicum, overall, is not typically a "hospitable place" (p. 14) in which student and teacher can share secret stories of teaching and learning experiences in an educative way. As university facilitator, I often found myself working with students and teachers who would manage this uneasy space by portraying themselves as certain and expert. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) refer to these public faces as cover stories that are told and lived in an effort to fit the expected plotlines of the sacred story of teacher education. In my experience, a language of certainty and prescription and replication of practice mostly permeated the practicum experience.*

During my involvement with practicum students at Faculté Saint-Jean, I had an opportunity to look into some of these private and public stories. I had become aware of the challenges faced by education students of colour or of different ethno-cultural backgrounds, both during coursework and field experiences. I admired the courage with which they faced the enormous task of trying to negotiate the landscape of our educational community. Drawn by the title of an upcoming Western Canadian Association of Student Teachers (Westcast) conference—"Finding the Courage to Teach in a Changing World"—I invited a panel of students representing some of the multiple cultures present at Faculté Saint-Jean to join me in an exploration of the impact of our cultural differences on the way each of us came to know, interpret, and understand our daily experiences. Students on the panel were from Rwanda, Morocco, Dominica, Quebec, and Alberta, which was represented by both a Francophone and an Anglophone French immersion graduate. We met on six occasions to share personal experiences. I remember hearing stories of confusion, misinterpretation, and marginalization, even ghettoization. Our panel presentation, entitled "Crossing the Borders of Multiculturalism in Teacher Education," presented some highlights of our conversations as well as recommendations for program changes that might address the challenges these students faced.

I think of my Westcast adventure as a border-crossing experience. Coming together in this way helped each of us begin to appreciate the limits of our personal understandings, to recognize some of the personal biases we carried, and to begin to cross over borders to appreciate cultural perspectives different from our own. As a beginning teacher educator, I knew I had caught a glimpse of the possibilities of reaching across borders to build community. I also recognized that were it not for this conference, such an exchange probably would never have taken place. I began to think about the kinds of spaces our teacher education program was providing for cross-cultural learning and for sharing stories of personal experience.

Moments of Disruption Bring Confusion

In the fall of 2001, I had the opportunity to teach an introductory educational foundations course that introduced students to historical and sociological perspectives in education. This course included two components with which I had no prior experience. My experience teaching them brought unexpected results. I relate two experiences in relation to these components. The first story explores a moment of disruption that made me wake up to complexities of my personal identity, which, up to this point, I had neatly constructed around a minority perspective. The second explores a moment of disruption when, as a result of a student's experience with cross-cultural engagement, I began to have doubts about my belief in educating preservice teachers for diversity through border-crossing engagements.

As I reviewed the course syllabus, I came across a section on Aboriginal education. Feeling under-qualified to address this topic, I contacted Evelyn Goodstriker at her Alberta Education office. She accepted my invitation to speak to my students and, in preparation for her visit, we met several times for coffee. She told me stories of her life growing up in southern Saskatchewan, of her early years on a reserve, of the residential school she attended, of her family life on a ranch, of her spiritual beliefs, and of the projects with which she was involved in respect to Aboriginal education. We agreed she would come to class and share her stories as well as bring copies of a new teaching resource she had helped prepare for distribution in Alberta high schools.

On the day of her visit, I picked Evelyn up and drove her across the river to Faculté Saint-Jean. As we pulled into the campus parking lot, I noticed she suddenly stopped talking. I looked over and found her staring up at the façade of one of the Faculté Saint-Jean buildings, a recently renovated one which once served as a student residence when the Oblate fathers ran the facility as a boys' college. The brick façade had been preserved intact as a symbol of the Francophone presence in Alberta. Assuming she was admiring its beauty, I re-opened the conversation:

- Beautiful building isn't it? It's almost a hundred years old and it was preserved as a heritage site. My father slept in the fourth floor dorm when he was a student here in the forties.

  (Silence)
- Yes…she answered quietly…but I was just thinking how much it reminds me of the residential school we had to attend in my community.

At that moment, I became jarringly aware of the insensitivity of my words. What was I thinking? Had she not told me over coffee about her experience in the residential school? Did I not know that residential schools were run by religious orders in buildings very similar in appearance to the one we were staring at? How could I have shown such disregard for Evelyn's point of view in favour of my own? Why hadn't I ever laid Evelyn's perspective of the façade alongside my own until this moment, when we sat side by side in my car facing it? Why hadn't I anticipated this moment when we talked about residential schools over coffee and now, what could I possibly say to undo the harm? With quiet dignity, Evelyn turned to me and rescued me from my discomfiture with these words:

- It's so strange to be coming to a place like this to talk about my culture. But I'm glad you invited me.

Until that moment, I thought of myself as one who, because of my minority perspective, was awake to difference both personally and professionally. But this experience made me realize that I needed to reconsider the way I had listened to Evelyn's story, as she had told it over several coffees.

When I shared this story with her, my supervisor, Jean, pointed out the significance of the façade. It served as a catalyst for the bumping up moment Evelyn and I experienced as we laid our respective stories side-by-side. Evelyn certainly told me about her experience of residential schools in the coffee shop and I sympathized, but hearing it then seemed to have done little more than scratch the surface of my worldview. I shared the dominant cultural script of residential schools as having been a historical and social smudge on our collective history and I appreciated the importance of educating my students to this reality. But it remained a distant reality nonetheless, one with which I had no personal connection…until I found myself sitting in my car with Evelyn. Greene (1994) speaks of perspectivism as a way to explain how one's view is contingent on lived situation. Evelyn and I had different lived experiences of the façade and this is why it symbolized very different things. To me, it was a symbol of cultural survival. To her, it was a painful reminder of language loss and cultural assimilation. And that was not a reality that could be smoothed over in polite conversation. With her quiet words, Evelyn taught me to see things from her point of view and helped me hear her story again, this time with a different kind of attention.

This incident revealed to me how I had been conditioned to construct Aboriginal realities as existing somewhere at the margins of my daily reality. I found myself very much situated in the mainstream as a White woman of privilege carrying taken-for-granted mainstream views.

> *I have come to think of this event as a moment of rupture or as Carr (1986) would describe it, as disruption in my narrative coherence. I was shocked into realizing that while I considered myself of a minority mindset, when it came to Aboriginal issues, my outlook was very much consistent with the majority. Lugones (1987) helps me understand my failure to identify with Evelyn's story. She explains that a bicultural individual develops flexibility in shifting between an insider's mainstream construction of life and an outsider's minority construction of it. With that ability to shift in the mainstream comes the internalization of certain arrogant perceptions with respect to other minority groups. Lugones believes that identification with the other, or* loving perception *is only possible if one travels to the other's world in order to understand how they see us. I understand my encounter with Evelyn in front of the façade as an experience of* world-travel *that made me aware of my arrogant perception and the need to make my minority experience problematic.*

I hold on to this story as a significant one, for it helped me understand my own identity as both minority and mainstream, depending on the context in which I find myself. It also strengthened my resolve to pursue opportunities for students to have direct personal experience with difference as a way to be awakened to another's reality, to "fill the voids, the holes in [their] own experience when it comes to being with others and being in the world" (Greene, 1994, p. 19).

I encountered a second moment of disruption as a beginning teacher educator. The educational foundations course also included an optional component of a 12-hour volunteer placement in inner-city schools. The placement was designed to put preservice teachers in contact with children whose experience of school was likely different from their own and to help them understand some of the realities of their experience in inner-city schools. I was excited by this prospect because I felt that the opportunity to volunteer opened up a space for preservice teachers to engage in cross-cultural learning. As a result of my experience with Evelyn, I decided to expand the placements to include volunteering opportunities in several outreach schools, some offering Aboriginal programming. In addition to volunteering, students were asked to write a reflective paper on their experience. As I read these papers at the end of the first term, I was struck by the richness of some of the reflections I was finding. I decided to incorporate an oral presentation requirement for the following term to enable students to hear about each other's learning experiences.

The moment of disruption came at the end of the winter term when one student, Chris, stood to talk about his experience of volunteering in a band-controlled school situated on a reserve near his home. Adopting a very judgmental tone, he proceeded to list the many problems he observed during his time there: dilapidated buildings, apathy among students, as well as absenteeism and disrespect for the teachers who were, for the most part, non-Aboriginal. The only bright spot he observed was when the students he was observing got ready for their Physical Education class. Attributing the sudden change of attitude to the Aboriginal heritage of the Physical Education teacher, he ended his presentation by stating that he could never teach in a "place like that" and that the only hope he could see was for "these children" to have teachers "of their own kind" (Personal communication, April 2002).

I was shocked and dismayed by Chris' presentation. Having counted on these volunteering placements to help students challenge stereotypes, I was confronted with a student whose experience had only served to confirm them. I had sought to put my students into these volunteer placements for the express purpose of opening their eyes to difference and it seemed that all I had succeeded in doing for Chris was place him in a situation that provided confirmation for all the prior judgments he had made about Aboriginal people. And what was worse, by incorporating oral presentations, I inadvertently provided a forum for him to share views that ran contrary to my course aims. I felt the weight of responsibility for the other students listening to his presentation and for the negative perception of band-controlled schools they might take away based on one student's brief experience.

The public nature of this second moment of disruption was significant for me. While Evelyn met the arrogance of my perception with a quiet observation, I could not find words to respond to Chris. What ensued was an aggressive challenge from another student. The discussion that followed deteriorated into a standoff which, judging by the way they squirmed in their chairs, the majority of students would rather not have been part of. In the moment, I had neither the time nor the skills at my disposition to inquire into the tension that resulted.

This remains a memorable moment for me—one in which my dream of opening mainstream preservice teachers' eyes to diversity through cross-cultural engagement had backfired. While I was still convinced that crossing borders to explore difference was critical, this incident made me appreciate how important it was to mediate those encounters across borders. Just as Evelyn's quiet words helped mediate our encounter in the private space of my car, in the public space of my classroom, I needed to mediate Chris' encounter with Aboriginal realities as he had seen them in the band-controlled school. And I had failed to do that. Laying these two moments of disruption side by side highlighted, for me, the complexity of the process of learning about others and about self in relation to others. I began to doubt the value of brief, unmediated encounters across borders and concluded that learning experientially about diversity was a more complex undertaking than I thought.

Moments of Connection Bring Clarity

These experiences compelled me to further my understanding and led me to a doctoral seminar course entitled "Reconsidering Teacher Education." As an opening activity, we were asked to reflect on our journey as educators and to create an identity memo.

> *The identity memo stems from the work of Clandinin and Connelly (1994) as well as Vinz (1997) and Bateson (1989), all of whom call attention to narratives of experience and to the personal and storied aspects of life as composition. Bateson (1994) invites us to pay attention to continuity and to the patterns of our lives as a framework for meaning and invites the art of improvisation which involves recombining partly familiar materials in new ways that are sensitive to context, interaction, and response. Vinz (1996) invites us to read the experiential texts of*

> *our teaching lives as a way of making meaning of it. Drawing on her understanding of the storied nature of teacher knowledge, our course instructor, Jean Clandinin, asked us to begin our reconsideration of teacher education by examining our own life histories.*

As I reflected on who I was and where I was going, I chose to create a visual representation of my journey. It was an image depicting converging orbits surrounded on three sides by bands of cloud through which shafts of light emerged at various intervals over time. I chose the orbits to represent my intersecting identities—the layers of my SELF as a result of the various subject positions I occupied along this journey. Around the orbits sat three bands of clouds representing my professional involvements over three educational settings (schools, government, and university), each of which brought new dimensions to my evolving perspective on education. The shafts of light represented moments of insight or learnings over the years that I considered critical in shaping who I was as an educator committed to learning and teaching about diversity.

Stepping back from my image, I began to discern themes: creating safe spaces for learners, building community across differences, fostering belonging and cross-cultural awareness, and promoting multicultural education[3]. Reflecting on these insights in the context of my whole life story helped me begin to understand how my identity had been shaped and been expressed in my teaching practice.

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[3] Note to reader: In an earlier doctoral course, I explored the concept of multicultural education and became aware of different interpretations and terminology reflected in the literature. Whether referred to as multicultural education (U.S.), critical multicultural education (Canada), anti-racist pedagogy (Canada and Britain), it seemed that issues were primarily around questions of race, culture, and ethnicity. In the context of my experience of schools and teacher education, I felt it important to include other differences such as gender, sexual identity, social class, and ability and it is for this reason that I shifted my interest to diversity, a term which I found to be inclusive of many categories of difference.

> *The term narrative unity as used by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Carr (1986) became significant for me at this point in my process of self-exploration. As I searched for emerging themes in my identity memo, it became evident that my interest in diversity had its roots in my early family experiences and had followed me through both my personal and professional lives. Greene (1995) speaks of the importance of taking account of our original landscapes and seeing in our life a route which gradually clarifies itself; it seems that diversity was like a thread running through my life and finding its current expression in my preoccupation with diversity in teacher education.*

From this reflective exercise, three important considerations emerged to inform my thinking about how I came to know about diversity. First, the identity memo helped me understand the importance of time, that is, of situating my current personal and teaching identity within the temporal context of my whole life experience.

> *Clandinin and Connelly (1995) refer to the professional knowledge landscape as a frame for the context of teacher knowledge in terms of individual teacher knowledge, the working landscape, and the ways in which this landscape relates to public policy and theory. Adding a social dimension to their understanding of narratives of experience as personal practical knowledge, they began to attend more specifically to the way a teacher's knowledge is shaped by his or her work contexts. As I looked back over my career as an educator, I realized the impact my relationships with people across three different contexts at different times had in shaping my evolving understanding of the concept of diversity.*

Looking backwards toward my narrative history helped me appreciate how much who I was had influenced my understanding of and preoccupation with diversity. I wondered why I had never done such an activity as a preservice student. I also asked myself why I had never thought to ask preservice teachers to consider their own personal knowledge and prior experiences. I came away from the identity memo activity convinced this kind of backward glance or autobiographical reflection needed to become part of every preservice teacher's education as they prepare to meet diversity in the classroom.

> *I find Miller's (1998) exploration of the tensions and potentials in the uses of autobiography as a form of educational inquiry helpful. She cautions against the telling of teacher stories as an end unto itself; instead she calls on us to recognize the constructions of our selves as mediated by social and cultural forces and contexts, as well as by the unconscious. These are never-ending, complex, culturally and linguistically conditioned processes that merit reflection. Schön's (1991) case studies of educators taking a reflective turn was also helpful in this regard in that it provided insight into the way educators can learn by turning their thoughts back on themselves, questioning their own practices, and making their own understanding problematic to themselves. Schön believed that as practitioners confront unexpected problems for which generalized skills are insufficient, they engage in a form of knowing-in-action that becomes the foundation of their professional practice. Clarke (1995) extends Schön's idea by adding temporal and contextual dimension to it. In his work with student teachers in practicum contexts, he found that rather than reflecting on incidental or episodic incidents in their teaching, students reflected thematically across incidents and settings; time then became an important consideration.*

Secondly, the identity memo helped me attend to the importance of place in my experience of learning about diversity. Many of my current understandings in the area of diversity had come as a result of border-crossing (Giroux, 1992) experiences, situations where I had direct and personal involvement with people from different ethnic, racial, religious, social, or academic backgrounds.

> *At this point in time, my understanding of border-crossing experiences was influenced by Giroux's (1992)* Border Crossings. *Calling attention to the pluralistic nature of society and schools, Giroux encourages teachers to cross borders in a number of important ways: first, to understand the limits of their own locatedness; secondly, to cross from the center to the margins by allowing students a voice with which to share personal narratives and by engaging them in critical analysis of issues within them; and finally, to think beyond their traditional borders of influence and to create alternative spheres of social and political action beyond the school. While I believed these were all valuable goals, I struggled with translating these theoretical principles into everyday practice. A short while later, I learned that a Centre colleague, Carla Nelson (2003), was exploring diversity in the context of cross-cultural professional development in Kenya. Also influenced by Giroux's metaphor of teachers as border crossers, she explained how her thinking shifted towards the idea of borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1999) as a way make sense of the way teachers enter into cross-cultural*

> *experiences. A conversation with Nelson helped me clarify my interest in exploring cross-cultural experience in the borderlands that surround us every day in our local contexts.*

The identity memo also helped me see that all my border-crossing experiences had occurred outside of formal teacher education and professional development opportunities. Considering my current interest in teacher education, the irony was remarkable…and it made me wonder to what extent border-crossing opportunities currently existed *within* our teacher education program. While I knew that concepts such as multiculturalism, difference, and diversity were part of the teacher education curriculum, I suspected they often remained inaccessibly abstract and removed from mainstream preservice teachers' worlds. If direct cross-cultural experience helped me understand diversity, then it seemed reasonable to think cross-cultural experiences would have similar results for preservice teachers. Yet, my experience with Chris cast a dark shadow of doubt over that possibility. Perhaps then, what was needed were spaces for border-crossing experiences created somewhere other than the university classroom and the traditional field experience placement and preferably as early as possible in the program.

> *I was inspired by Barton's (2000) work integrating an inquiry-based service-learning approach as a vehicle for enacting multicultural science education. Her research involved preservice teachers in the science teaching program at a large U.S. east coast university who were given the opportunity to teach science collaboratively to children, after school, at a homeless shelter in a large metropolitan area. She found this service learning experience beneficial in three ways. It provided an opportunity to reflect on science and teaching separate from schooling, and therefore separate from perceived expectations. It also allowed preservice teachers to work with students informally, which opened up space for uncertainty. Finally, putting preservice teachers in contact with unfamiliar populations such as homeless children provided the opportunity to open up the question of context for learning about multicultural education.*

A third lesson I took away from the identity memo experience was the importance of learning in relationship with others, as I had done with Evelyn. Over the course of my studies, I had several more opportunities to create and share autobiographical work of this nature. Each time I engaged in this kind of backward glance, and, more importantly, each time I shared the product of my reflection with others, whether in the form of a life chronicle, an artefact journey, a curriculum of one, or an exploration of the significance of place, new insights emerged. Each time I told my story, someone responded either by way of a comment or a question which helped me remember another event, another feeling, and reflect again. Other people also shared their stories. Each time I listened, I looked back on my own story, made new connections, gained new understandings, and imagined new possibilities. Each presentation was followed by a re-presentation. These experiences heightened my interest in relational knowing and collaborative reflection as a way to help student teachers make sense of their emerging teaching identities.

> *I find both Lyons' (1998) exploration of the portfolio interview and the work of Hollingsworth (1994) with sustained conversation as modes of fostering teacher reflection helpful to my evolving understanding of relational knowing. Hollingsworth explores sustained conversation as a tool for fostering reflection and growth with a group of teachers over a period of six years. Similarly, Lyons explores the importance of providing support for reflection if it is to take on its educative potential; she sees it as a process of drawing together strands of experience and connections over time. Using a two-step interview process, she shows how the reflective portfolio can be taken to a deeper level through a personal interview process and how these successive interviews can weave together strands of experience, theory, and practice into new meaning. The reflective portfolio interview becomes a powerful tool for growth as the insights and learnings became accessible both to the preservice teachers and to their teacher educators.*

The identity memo activity provided an *aha* moment, on both a personal and a collective level. Thinking narratively about teacher knowledge across time, place and relationship and reconsidering the story of my own coming to know about diversity provided a useful lens through which to begin exploring some of my wonders. It helped me understand the roots of my interest in diversity, the patterns that have guided its unfolding into a recurring preoccupation in my teaching practice. My experiences with Chris and Evelyn heightened my awareness of the challenges teacher education programs face in preparing mainstream candidates (and minority ones like me) to teach in an increasingly diverse world. I began to puzzle about how preservice teachers in other programs were learning about diversity. I wondered whether they were being engaged and supported in similar kinds of reflective activities as a way to understand their past experiences. I also wondered to what extent their prior understandings of diversity were being explored. With these questions in mind, I turned to the literature to see what I might learn about teacher education in response to diversity.

CHAPTER 2: CONSIDERING TEACHER EDUCATION IN RELATION TO DIVERSITY

Exploring the Complexities of Learning about Diversity

Teacher education programs have been focusing more attention recently on diversity in university classrooms but still grapple with the challenge of addressing issues of difference within a curriculum that reflects a tradition of conformity and certainty (Carson & Johnston, 2000). Sleeter (2001) reviews a number of research studies on preservice teacher preparation for multicultural schools, particularly schools situated in historically underserved communities. Among the initiatives reviewed are community-based cross-cultural immersion experiences as well as multicultural education coursework, including both stand-alone courses and those offered in conjunction with a field experience. Sleeter notes that while each of these initiatives has merit, none is free of challenges or certain to succeed. Reviewing the literature, I identified three plotlines that run through stories of teacher education as I've experienced it. I understand these plotlines to be the result of how teacher education programs choose to attend (or not) to diversity, either through selective attention, inattention, or diverted attention.

Selective Attention: The Tourist-Multicultural Approach

Florio-Ruane (2001) speaks of the challenge of dealing with culture in teacher education where "Whiteness" is seen as "the normal or unmarked cultural form" (p. 24). For many people in the mainstream, culture is what "'other people' (usually different from us in skin color, first language or economic circumstance) 'have'" (p. 33). Culture "as a static state or system is not very interesting to teachers" (p. 43) and is therefore pushed to the margins of the curriculum. In this view of multicultural education, which continues to evoke celebration of difference, often the exotic, the curriculum is left intact and multicultural concerns constitute "add-on activities" (Moodley, 2001, p. 810). Currently, at the undergraduate level of this university, there is no required stand-alone course on multicultural education. Where it does exist, multicultural education is often *inserted* within a curriculum created in the dominant culture. Multicultural components are sometimes integrated in foundation courses, provided as electives, integrated in methods or field experience courses, or included as major or minor areas of specialization in the education of specific groups. While it is possible and probable that the topic is addressed in many courses, I would agree with Sleeter's (2001) assessment that while teacher education programs are receptive toward learning about diversity, they tend to provide "disjointed multicultural content dependent on the interests of individual professors" (p. 95). While such initiatives seek to create a measure of cultural sensitivity in preservice teachers, they tend to keep attention focused on certain noticeable kinds of difference. Most curricular attempts to deal with the concept of culture in teacher education are limited to studying about the characteristics of particular ethnic groups (Florio-Ruane, 1994).

My experience with multicultural education involved a course component inserted into a required educational foundations course that provided an overview of schooling from both historical and sociological perspectives. Students were exposed to cultures of difference, namely Aboriginal, immigrant, and inner-city cultures. Delpit (1995) points out that when they are exploring these particular concepts, preservice teachers are typically exposed to "autopsies of failure" (p. 178) of culturally diverse students viewed as clients whose deficiencies need to be remediated. I wonder now to what extent the articles I presented and the class discussions that followed challenged these child-deficit assumptions in my own teaching. McDiarmid (1992) points out how paradoxical it is to attempt to challenge stereotypical thinking about minority groups while asking students to learn about cultural patterns of specific groups. I wonder whether I, as instructor, wasn't simply guiding students through a *tour* of these communities through the articles, visiting places and people of interest almost as tourists would do in a foreign country. Little wonder that following these brief visits to *foreign cultures,* assumptions were not challenged as students returned to the comfort of their *home* communities, the majority of which were culturally homogeneous rural and suburban.

If meeting the multicultural discourse on a theoretical level in coursework was challenging and less meaningful, I hoped that an experiential engagement with these communities beyond the classroom would help prospective teachers connect on a personal level and build awareness of diversity. And, to some degree, it did. But, as I related earlier, the outcome was far from certain. As I read Sleeter's (2001) review of program initiatives involving concurrent course and fieldwork in the form of tutoring experiences outside of White[4] and middle-class contexts, I could identify with her conclusions. My students also volunteered mostly as tutors/helpers in inner-city schools and outreach programs and while the field experience disconfirmed stereotypes for some students, for at least one other, it reinforced and produced more stereotypical attitudes. I agree with her conclusion that "students interpreted their inner city field experiences mainly through the preconceptions they brought with them and the accompanying coursework did not sufficiently engage them in examining these perceptions" (p. 100). While only Chris had actually voiced how much his experience confirmed his prior conceptions, I suspected there were others who silently shared similar feelings. On the whole, students found engaging with these communities an exciting, almost exotic experience in their teacher education program, a kind of interesting side-trip to explore how children from other cultural and social backgrounds experience school. While their reflective papers suggested that the experience opened their eyes to the challenges these children faced, I'm not at all sure that the field experience, nor the very brief class-based discussions that followed their oral presentations, succeeded in doing more than scratching the surface of some well-anchored child-deficit assumptions of which Delpit (1995) speaks. The multicultural component in my course remained focused on the idea of at-risk and underprivileged children and, given this focus, it retained something of a "tourist-multicultural" flavour (Derman-Sparks, 1995, p. 17).

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[4] I understand Sleeter uses the term "White" and "Whiteness" in her research to be equivalent to the term mainstream.

When I think of the way issues of ability are explored in teacher education, I situate special needs learners among the communities of difference that receive selective attention and are *visited* as a foreign culture. Just as the concept of culture is often explored by studying about the characteristics of ethnic groups, the concept of disability is often dealt with by surveying the characteristics of various learning difficulties and disabilities and paying particular attention to procedural issues of identification, referral, and the creation of individualized program plans. Grumet (1988) deplores the proliferation of this "naming game,"

> which has, in the guise of individuation of instruction and under the pretense of sensitivity to differences, bestowed new names, such as "learning disabled," "gifted," and "disadvantaged," upon hundreds of thousands of children. (p. 173)

Ware (2001) takes issue with a discourse of containment and control she feels surrounds issues of ability because it creates an *us* and *them* mentality, constructing less able students as an *at-risk* or *deficit* culture. She calls for disability to be re-imagined and suggests this process could begin by problematizing disability through a cultural lens, interrogating ability in much the same way that feminist studies scholars interrogate gender and ethnic studies scholars interrogate Whiteness. In this way, future teachers might learn to move past mere tolerance of difference that reinforces "the hegemony of the able-ist assumptions, as if to say, 'that's just the way it is'" (Ware, p. 112).

Ware's (2001) parallel in respect of disability informs my thinking about diversity and confirms the need to push the discourse in teacher education beyond issues of race, ethnicity, culture, and language towards the "larger meaning of social inclusion and the value of creating a shared responsibility for all children" (p. 112). I've come to think of students with special needs or learning differences as one of the *multiple cultures* deserving of attention with respect to diversity. As in the case of multicultural education components focused on cultural and socio-economic difference, addressing this community from an at-risk or deficit perspective retains something of a *tourist* flavour and, as such, leaves preservice teachers' dispositions rarely challenged.

Inattention: The Colour-Blind Curriculum

A second plotline in the story of teacher education is the attachment to a non-active, colour-blind curriculum articulated in teacher statements such as "I don't see colour, I see only children" (Paley, as cited in Delpit, 1995, p. 177) and other well-intentioned teacher statements such as "We're all part of the human race," "they're all children to me," or "I treat all my students alike" (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1995, p. 19). These "soft-denials" of difference are based on a belief that culture plays no part in their teaching (Téllez & O'Malley, 1998, p. 173). Colour blindness is also evident in the rotten apple theory (Troyna & Carrington, 1990) where incidents of racism are viewed as individual in nature, the product of ignorance on the part of individuals. These beliefs deny the existence of institutional racism and the impact of other more socially acceptable expressions of *common sense* racism.

Although teachers and teacher educators need to explore their own beliefs and attitudes about cultures of difference, many believe, and do, exactly the opposite. Assuming that it is impolite to notice and talk about race, teachers believe they are expected to be colour-blind (Florio-Ruane, 2001). I have seen evidence of non-activity and colour-blindness operating in both university classrooms and school settings; it manifests itself as an avoidance of potentially difficult issues. In the school context, I have observed teachers and student teachers turning a blind eye to bullying or discrimination on the belief that *kids will be kids* and they will *eventually figure things out*. In the practicum context, I've known of student teachers, cooperating teachers, and faculty advisors avoiding issues of difference, whether in respect to cultural difference or ability, for fear of it becoming messy. And in the university classroom context, I felt, in students' comments, an underlying belief that the school system and other social institutions are largely fair and open to those who try. Fine (1987) refers to this belief in equal opportunity and the colour-blind power of credentials as "colour-blind meritocracy" (p. 160).

Bateson's (1994) idea of patterns of attention and inattention makes me think about the way we become conditioned to downplay cultural difference. We shy away from engaging reflection on broader social concerns not just because we've been socialized that way but also because we want to remain within and protect our zones of comfort.

> Even as we compete to receive attention or struggle to know where to give it, it remains the elusive prerequisite of all thought and learning, always selective and always based on some implicit theory of relevance, of connection. Patterns of attention and inattention cluster in every setting and are packaged and pummelled into new forms in school and in the workplace...There is a simultaneous development of the capacity to ignore and discard...Inattention is as much a learned skill as attention. (p. 101)

Bateson's (1994) comments help me as I consider my own patterns of inattention in respect to Aboriginal communities. This pattern of inattention was unlikely to be broken as I embarked on a career as a French Immersion teacher given that the program did not typically draw students from the Aboriginal community and, in those days, did not include any school in the inner city. It was true that Aboriginal and inner-city realities fell largely outside of my area of professional responsibility. Why then, one might wonder, would I need to attend to it in my preservice program? I'm sure several students shared this wonder as they surveyed the syllabus for the educational foundations course.

Cochran-Smith (2000) adds another layer to the idea of patterns of attention. She writes of having experienced moments of "blind vision, a phrase that suggests simultaneously seeing and not seeing" (p. 185) and in the process, waking up to the way her lifelong membership in a privileged racial group had kept her blind to the impact of race.

> I have come to think of the story…as a story of "blind vision" – a White female educator with a vision about the importance of making issues of race and diversity explicit parts of the preservice curriculum and, in the process, grappling (sometimes blindly) with the tension, contradictions, difficulty, pain and failure inherent in unlearning racism. (p. 165)

It seems that I too had both seen and not seen, or at least heard and not heard, Evelyn's story. I had been conditioned to construct Aboriginal realities as existing somewhere at the margins of my daily life. Lugones (1987) also helps me understand why this happened. She explains that bicultural individuals develop the flexibility to shift between an insider's mainstream construction of life and an outsider's minority construction of it. With that ability to shift into the mainstream comes the internalization of *arrogant perceptions* with respect to other minority groups. Lugones believes that identification with the other, or *loving perception*, is only possible if one travels to the other's world in order to understand how they see us. I understand my encounter with Evelyn in front of the façade as an experience of world-travel where I became aware of the arrogance of my perception of the façade and why I failed to identify with Evelyn's lived experience of it.

Attending to my patterns of attention and inattention reminds me that each preservice teacher carries his/her own understanding or story of diversity, based on direct experience or lack thereof, as well as his/her own story of school. Sleeter's (2001) review found that while most White preservice teachers anticipate working with children of another cultural background, as a whole, they bring very little cross-cultural knowledge when they enter their teacher education program. It confirmed that preservice student teachers are fairly naïve and hold stereotypic beliefs about urban children, such as believing they either bring intrinsic psychological characteristics that interfere with their learning or are the victims of cultural attitudes that interfere with education. Florio-Ruane (2001) concurs that teachers have a "default-mode of thinking" (p. 34) whereby learner differences are attributed to deficits and therefore situated outside teachers' spheres of influence. Engaging students in a critical examination of these perspectives is risky and many White preservice teachers "tend to use colorblindness as a way of coping with fear and ignorance" (Sleeter, 2001, p. 95).

Sleeter's (2001) conclusions are consistent with my Canadian experience. I did not recall learning about multiculturalism in my teacher education program or exploring my own cultural identity in teacher education. An assignment on multiculturalism in a doctoral course gave me my first opportunity to look closely at the meaning of the term. Like most Canadians, I espoused the ideals of multiculturalism and anti-racism [5], but I came to the conclusion that I had adopted the rhetoric without ever having stopped to consider what multiculturalism meant in the context of everyday life. Only then did I appreciate the complexities and the challenge of implementing an ideology of cultural pluralism "firmly located in a consensus paradigm" (Moodley, 2001, p. 809) in a way that would reflect both the historical and geographic cultural realities of Canada.

> For most educators, [multicultural education] is an end in itself. At best it is used as a means to create a congenial environment. Differences are to be gently reaffirmed along a guiding thread of similarities. Cultural differences must therefore be selectively laundered of controversial spots and assessed for their compatibility with mainstream values as determined from the perspective of the dominant group. (Moodley, 2001, p. 809)

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[5] Exploring the literature on multicultural education, I found geographical distinctions in the use of the term. Multicultural education as it began in Britain and existed in Canada in the 1980s focused on other cultures as *them* whereas anti-racist education, as it now exists in Britain and is increasingly referred to in Canada, focuses on *us* and our role in marginalizing *them* (Troyna & Carrington, 1990). Also referred to as critical or redefined multicultural education in the Canadian context (Ghosh, 2002), as social-reconstructionist multicultural education in the American context (Sleeter & Grant, 1994), anti-racist education pays particular attention to the politics of difference that aim to promote racial equality and eliminate discrimination, both individual and institutional (Troyna & Carrington). It also draws attention to the difference between the rhetoric of multiculturalism and its practice. The strengths of antiracism over multicultural education lie in its incorporation of historical analysis, its differentiated discussion of how different groups experience racism, and the interconnections it draws among different kinds of oppression such as gender and racial oppression (Moodley, 2001). It is my understanding that over the course of the last 20 years in Canada, there has been a shift in multicultural discourse from a focus on inter-group harmony to inter-group equity (Rezai-Rashti, 1995) and from an emphasis on tolerance and the celebration of differences to an emphasis on equity and the dynamics of difference.

I remember listening to two classmates present their experience of emigrating from Caribbean countries to raise their families in Canada. Their different perspectives were reflected in the way each woman identified herself: one as Trinidadian, the second as Jamaican-Canadian. Each had constructed an identity with varying degrees of attachment to her country of origin or adoption. What they shared, however, was the experience of discrimination, some of which they related to us. I remember how the class reacted as they spoke. As the discussion moved past focusing on *them* and their cultural traditions towards *us* and the way we, collectively as Canadians, related to them as immigrants, the tone of the class changed. I remember sensing discomfort in the room as eyes lowered, looked away or turned expectantly towards our professor in the hope that he would know how to navigate us past this uncomfortable moment. Perhaps we felt some measure of responsibility as Canadians for the challenges these women faced; for many of us, this was an unfamiliar story of multiculturalism. I realized that while we all proudly spoke of our country's multicultural heritage and inclusive policies on a collective level, the illusion of a consensual mix of cultures dissolved when personal stories related a different reality. Multiculturalism held our attention well when it focused on the positive aspects of "dance, dress, diet and dialect" (Toh, 2000, p. 24). When the discussion took us outside our comfort zones, it seemed easier to turn a blind eye to it. Hale Hankins (1998) refers to an unspoken shared denial that happens when it is so difficult to bridge the distance between two cultures that we just don't talk about it.

> It means we walk beside the problem everyday, bumping shoulders with it and never turning to look it directly in the face. Something like elevator etiquette; face forward and don't talk. (p. 83)

Teacher educators provide a powerful subtext for diversity in teacher education by choosing to address culture from the perspective of some and not others (Cochran-Smith, 1995b). Dilemmas of race, culture, and diversity in teacher education can neither be ignored nor glossed over. While we espouse and flaunt the ideals of multiculturalism, we need to face the challenge of addressing what the concept means in the everyday sense, even when that exploration takes us to difficult places where inequalities surface. As Cochran-Smith (1995a) states in her article, colour blindness and basket-making are not the answers. "Teachers who are inquirers do not have to be color blind in order to be fair to all students" (Cochran-Smith, 1995a, p. 520). Nor will a focus on the "tourist-multicultural approach" (Derman-Sparks, 1995, p. 17) help them nurture diversity. Preservice teachers need to do more than learn about the other; they need to learn about themselves in relation to the other and understand themselves as an other to others. They need to understand their positioning as part of a dominant culture and recognize the biases that affect their view of non-dominant groups in society (Lee, 1995).

Diverted Attention: The Teacher as Technician Approach

Staying focused on the business of teaching is a powerful story in teacher education where instrumental pragmatic concerns seem to outweigh social and intellectual ones. Within the apprenticeship model, which is the basis of most teacher education programs, preservice teachers are first trained in the theories of teaching in university contexts and then move to hands-on, in-classroom settings where they learn to imitate the classroom practices of expert teachers (Schön, 1983). Preservice teachers commonly expect and are expected to learn and practice specific tried and true strategies, and competency is often framed as effective use of classroom management techniques and of teaching methods. There is a sense of fixed knowledge with a strong focus on the technical aspects of teaching, particularly methods and management.

The curriculum of certainty and conformity that emerges in coursework typically remains unchallenged during fieldwork. There are good reasons for this. Sleeter's (2001) review found that preservice students were generally placed in field experiences reminiscent of their childhood. Even when they were placed in schools in diverse communities for their field experiences, they rarely had the chance to learn from teachers working *against the grain* of the profession's colour and culture blindness (Cochran-Smith, 1991). Even if preservice teachers received some multicultural course instruction, by the time they student taught, they were so concerned with survival in the classroom that they subordinated any interest in multicultural education to the demands of their cooperating teachers (Sleeter). Preservice teachers' energies during these weeks typically seem to be more focused on figuring out how to do things right, in other words, how to replicate the practice of the cooperating teacher in order to secure a passing grade. With little room for exploration and uncertainty, many simply count the days until they have their own classroom in which to teach according to their own way of seeing the world.

Cochran-Smith (1995a) refers to the tension between the “lesson plan stance” and the “transformative, inquiry stance” (p. 521) in fieldwork. As a university facilitator, I did find myself caught between these stances. Issues that needed to be inquired into were sometimes set aside for lack of time and energy unless they concerned classroom methods and management.

Educating for diversity needs to be reconceptualised as a political and moral process involving sensibilities and skill development far beyond the technical vocational realm (Young, 1995). This is a tall order given the current educational environment focus on student outcomes. A paradox exists between trying to attend to the complexity of learning about diversity and the urgency created by the political rhetoric of crisis that permeates the discussion of teaching, teacher education, and teacher quality (Florio-Ruane, 2002):

> Unless we take the time and the responsibility to keep our work—and our field—complex, we will be unable to resist the crisis-driven, regressive behaviors that harden the lines of power and authority and limit educational inquiry. (p. 214)

Disposition and Diversity

What was once pushed to the margins as the problem of other people’s children (Delpit, 1995) is now a mainstream issue that merits our attention. Paying attention begins with reconceptualizing multicultural education from a focus on other to a focus on the self in relation to the other. This involves addressing issues of disposition, beliefs, and attitudes in the process of becoming a teacher responsive to diversity. The challenge I see is to create learning experiences in teacher education that take into account both the influence of the preservice teacher's lived curriculum (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994) and the complexity of learning about diversity.

Vinz (1997) believes real learning in respect to diversity can only take place if there is attitudinal involvement on the part of preservice teachers and it is necessary to address their attitudes through a process of "dis-positioning" (p. 139). This is difficult to accomplish in the context of teacher education programs where course-specific knowledge and skills are presented as building blocks preservice teachers use to construct their knowledge about what it means to become a teacher. Vinz points out how this delivery mode ignores that sometimes these building blocks either do not fit the student's prior assumptions and beliefs about teaching or are not presented in the context of learning opportunities that would dis-position them.

Vinz's (1997) words make me think of the way learning Spanish in the second year of my undergraduate program dis-positioned me from my prior assumption that being bilingual meant that I knew what it was to learn a second language. I learned French and English almost simultaneously from prolonged exposure to both languages. It wasn't until I found myself struggling to put unfamiliar words together that I could begin to understand what my students were experiencing in learning French as a second language. Struggling to put my thoughts into Spanish words dis-positioned me from my prior knowledge and experience of switching with ease between two known languages. This learning about second language pedagogy made a difference in my practice. It helped me understand why it is important to attend to both the cognitive and affective dimensions of the learning process.

Vinz (1997) calls for teacher education programs to include spaces where preservice teachers can experience being dis-positioned. Within these spaces, they engage in a process of continually learning to *un-know* and *not-know*.

> I think of *un-knowing*, giving up present understandings (positions) of our teaching to make gaps and spaces through which to (re)member ourselves as we examine the principles behind our practices, as a way to articulate our theories in practice, or transform pedagogical principles and purposes into new beginnings…*Not-knowing* is easier and harder. To *not-know* is to acknowledge ambiguity and uncertainty—dis-positioning from the belief that teachers should know or be able to lead or construct unambiguous journeys toward knowledge about curriculum and practice. To *not-know* the classroom and the learning and teaching that will take place there is to admit vulnerability. (p. 139)

Echoing Bateson's (1989) idea of becoming, Vinz (1996) calls on teachers to face themselves and recognize that "[they] enter into spaces of uncertainty when [they] teach…like standing on the threshold of a door that opens into nothing short of a void" (p. 277). It is critical then to continuously inquire into and re-examine our beliefs and practices, reformulating ourselves as we move forward. But asking prospective teachers to call into question prior understandings and accept ambiguity and uncertainty in the process of becoming a teacher is a daunting task, particularly in light of the powerful teacher as expert (Britzman, 1986) mentality that lives at the heart of our teacher education programs. Hinchman and Oyler (2000) explore the irony of preaching ideals of collaboration and inquiry to their students while their own teaching practice reflects a focus on technique and certainty of outcome:

> we re-enacted an expertise grounded in the techno-rational assumptions of our preparation and sense-making as teachers…Through our inquiry, we became painfully aware of the ways that our stable classroom practices spoke against our espoused theories of context-specific and shifting curriculum deliberation, separating us from them. (p. 391)

In a similar vein, Cochran-Smith (2000) speaks of the process of un-learning racism. She explains the word un-learning was deliberately chosen to reflect a process that signifies both growth and reversing growth. The contradiction signals both the complexity and the struggle to *unlearn* racism

> or to interrogate the racist assumptions that may be deeply embedded in our own courses and curricula, to own our own complicity in maintaining existing systems of privilege and oppression, and to grapple with our own failures to produce the kinds of changes we advocate. (p. 158)

Using her personal narratives as background for her reflections, she undertakes this struggle by learning to read teacher education as *racial text*. This involves examining the learning opportunities available within her program along the lines of implicit and explicit messages about race, racism, and teaching. She also acknowledges to other teachers and students that this must remain an ongoing process.

The theme of turning inward is also strong in Florio-Ruane's (2001) work in an autobiographical book club with preservice teachers. Surprised by the extent to which "her recounting of other people's experience was seen through her own lens" (p. 3), she began to attend to her own history, her own ethnicity. Exploring herself as a cultural being allowed her to focus on the way everyone participates in the construction of identity. Sharing her own story of addressing her ethnicity enabled her to add a personal perspective to the idea of studying "cultural narratives" (p. 12).

> Studying cultural narratives may encourage teachers to examine the lives of persons whose backgrounds differ from their own and simultaneously uncover their own cultural identities and re-examine their attitudes towards beliefs about different ethno-cultural groups. (p. 13)

Ethnicity is something Florio-Ruane (2001) believes is researchable and necessary. But she recognizes that making it the subject of inquiry, i.e. "shining the light of inquiry on the 'ethnic myth'" (2001, p. 5) can be experienced as distancing, especially for those students whose ethnic past goes back many generations. I am reminded here of my experiences in the doctoral course mentioned earlier. It seems then that cross-cultural learning experiences and the disconfirmation that they involve are unsettling events that should transform individuals. (Boyle-Baise & Efiom, 2000; Florio-Ruane, 2001). A state of disequilibrium seems to be an important step to engage the kind of reflection that will focus attention on identity and narratives of experience.

The perspectives of Vinz, Cochran-Smith, and Florio-Ruane are grounded in their personal teaching stories. Paley's (1995) narrative of discovering the limits and consequences of the colourblindness she adopted in regards to her African-American pupils is similarly compelling. Chris' negative comments following his volunteering placement remind me of Sonya, Paley's former Kindergarten student, who returns years later to tell her that she felt dumb and ugly in the integrated classroom so hopefully depicted in *White Teacher* (Paley, 1989). Paley (1995) writes of this encounter and her disappointment around it. The unexpected challenge motivates her to look again with new eyes at her integrated classroom to try to understand how she could have remained so indifferent to her former student's perspective and to probe into the assumptions she carried about African-American students. Paley's work helps me think about what it looks like to practice *un-knowing* and *not knowing*; unlearning prior beliefs and assumptions as well as not-knowing or taking into account that the process of becoming a teacher responsive to diversity is an ongoing, often complex, process that defies certainty of outcome. Just as Paley returned to her Kindergarten classroom to try to understand what had happened, I turned back to my experience of service learning.

Could my service learning experience be considered the kind of space Vinz (1997) speaks of which seeks to dis-position students' understanding of children from diverse cultures? In some respects, one might say it did take students outside of their comfort zones by engaging them in direct interaction with students whose backgrounds were very different from their own. In creating an opportunity for experiential learning beyond traditional field experiences, it did open up a space mostly free of technical or evaluative concerns. But while it may have provided insights into cultural diversity and awakened a sense of compassion for marginalized learners, the experience as it was structured provided students with little more than a passive "peek across borders" (Boyle-Baise, 2003, p. 4). Many came away with, at best, glimpses of understanding that were largely left unmediated because of lack of time and ability on my part. According to Ghosh (2002), cultural consciousness has two dimensions in its development: perspective consciousness and cross-cultural awareness. I feel I merely scratched the surface of perspective consciousness with my students and much learning still needed to take place in the area of cross-cultural awareness. If I were going to succeed in challenging stereotypic notions about inner city and culturally diverse communities through community service placements, I would have to pay closer attention to how I was structuring the experience and to the forces at work within it. I needed to pay attention to dis-position in a way that would both *plant seeds of awareness* about social issues and *pull weeds of imitation.*

> One must ground one's awareness of oppression and diversity in experience. Field experiences can provide the opportunity to plant seeds of awareness that may continue to grow and develop. Field experiences that are well constructed can also pull weeds of ignorance and misconception that all of us have about groups of which we are not members. (Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 1996, p. 345)

I turned back to the literature to explore the complexities of learning about diversity through service learning.

Exploring the Complexities of Service Learning

It is perhaps useful at this point to clarify what the term service learning means. As I considered how I should name the 12-hour volunteering experience my students had, I hesitated between *community service* and *service learning* or *community service learning*. Given that their experience of service in the community did involve a learning component in the form of a reflective paper for which they received credit (Rhoads, 1997), I chose to call it service learning. However, I qualify that decision by saying that while some service learning programs have been found to be either long on service and short on learning or long on learning and short on service (Téllez, 2000), I feel my experience of it was both short on service and short on learning. I now turn to an examination of the idea of service.

I understand service learning to be a way of teaching preservice teachers to appreciate the experience of diverse learners. Direct cross-cultural experiences can help them rethink the narrow criteria for normality which often cause cultural misunderstandings between students and the teacher (Boyle-Baise, 2002). But while Boyle-Baise believes that extending the learning environment beyond the classroom walls offers possibilities, she warns that the idea of service can be problematic. It is necessary to understand the underlying values and intents of service. She proposes a conceptual framework of three orientations to service learning: charity, civic education, and community building. Recognizing the paradigm within which the service experience takes place is an important step towards structuring the kind of learning experience that can eventually lead to culturally responsive teaching.

Service Learning as Charity

The charitable paradigm centres around the well-off *giving* to the less advantaged, the *giver* tending to the *needy*. While Boyle-Baise (2002) recognizes that there can be people who engage in this type of work from a deeply-felt spiritual base, she feels service engagements often provide temporary assistance to help marginalized people better deal with their disadvantage or oppression. Also referred to as the do-gooder model (Rhoads, 1997), the charity paradigm has a sense of benefaction or noblesse oblige (O'Grady, 2000) and perceives service as alms for the less fortunate rather than an act of service in return for learning. Service to others can have a "morphine-like effect" (Téllez, 2000, p. 75) in making the provider of service feel good about giving, but charitable efforts usually maintain a sense of distance between the provider and the recipient and exoticize people who are different (Boyle-Baise, 2002). By privileging the giver and demoting the receiver, the charity model perpetuates a deficit model and contradicts the goal of critical multicultural education.

Service Learning as Civic Education

The civic education paradigm views citizenship as something that can be developed through service. Service can lead to the development of knowledge and skills needed to promote social awareness and civic responsibility. The view in this belief is that service learning engagements will contribute to the making of better teachers. When students are engaged in service learning of this nature, they are able to recognize difficult conditions encountered in low-income and diverse communities, but they rarely situate the problem within the larger context of power (Boyle-Baise, 2002). Much of the language surrounding this orientation seems politically neutral; projects usually operate as a form of temporary redress for social problems and "action on behalf of the least advantaged serves one's enlightened self-interest" (Boyle-Baise, 2002, p. 24). Issues of power, powerlessness, and empowerment are not questioned, and structural inequality remains untouched, preventing the goal of critical multicultural education from being realized.

Service Learning as Community Building

By avoiding paternalistic relations, service learning within the community-building paradigm holds promise for helping mainstream teachers engage with communities of difference. Boyle-Baise (2002) presents two views of service learning within the community building paradigm, which differ in their focus despite a belief in the importance of community. The *communitarian view* supports mutualism while the *social change view* affirms cultural diversity and pluralism. The communitarian emphasis on commonality and seeking consensus about the common good can mute difference; singular notions of common good can mask diversity and reflect dominant views. The social change view, on the other hand, seeks the root causes of problems, supports multiple forms of common good, and advances change in policies, structures, and institutions (Boyle-Baise, 2002).

The distinction Boyle-Baise (2002) makes between these two views reminds me of the shift in multicultural discourse from a focus on inter-group harmony to inter-group equity (Rezai-Rashti, 1995) and from an emphasis on tolerance and the celebration of differences to an emphasis on equity and the dynamics of difference. While recognizing that both views hold promise, Boyle-Baise (2002) believes the social change view is most likely to have an impact on preservice teacher dispositions and skill development for later change-making in schools.

Reconsidering My Service Learning Experience

Boyle-Baise's (2002) conceptual framework for service provides a useful lens through which to reconsider my students' service learning experience. Many of their reflective papers did reflect a degree of *saviour mentality* and positive feelings associated with having made an important contribution to needy communities. For the most part, while they enjoyed the experience, I think they mostly remained at a *safe* distance from the lived realities of the children they encountered. The service learning provided insight into the school experience of children from other cultures but did not raise questions related to the construction of our social world. In retrospect, I think that students having volunteered in inner-city schools would have experienced a service engagement reflecting a civic education orientation. While the experiences provided a rich reference of relevant information to the students, they did not raise questions related to the construction of our social world. They did not challenge the deficit views many students brought with them.

The task at hand then was to determine how I might design a service learning engagement (within a limited time frame) that would reach past the deficit views inherent in the charity and civic education orientations and move towards community building and social change. Important adjustments in this regard included carefully selecting community sites in terms of their service orientation, paying attention to the nature and length of the engagement, ensuring collaborative relationship with community partners, and structuring reflexive activities before, throughout, and after the experience.

In encouraging further studies addressing multicultural education through cross-cultural field-based engagement, Boyle-Baise (2002) calls for attention to "the occurrences that serve to disrupt [preservice teachers'] assumptions and biases and how they made sense of these moments" (p. 133). With this in mind, I turned back to my research puzzle with a better understanding both of the challenge of educating teachers for diversity within the context of current teacher education programs and the potentialities and pitfalls of service learning as a context of cross-cultural engagement. I decided to focus my inquiry on how four preservice teachers came to know about diversity and whether their knowledge of diversity could be made to shift through a service learning experience with children from diverse backgrounds in the community. I then turned my thoughts to choosing the method of inquiry that would best allow me to do this.

CHAPTER 3: THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Choosing Narrative Inquiry

> *A friend told me that no one would ever appreciate what I was writing and saying unless I changed my presentation: "You've got to impress people. Go for Big Data, like American academics, or Big Theory, as the Europeans do...Stop sounding like a little girl just wondering about things," he said. "I wonder." Those are the words with which Anne Moody ends her book, more powerful than more explicit conclusions. Perhaps persuasion depends on leading the listener to discover the truth of what is being said somewhere in his or her own experience. (Bateson, 2000, p. 236)*

Bateson's words help me appreciate the fact that sometimes, as we search for wisdom in grand theory, we come up with questions, observations, and wonders that bring us right back to our own backyards. My knowledge of diversity had not begun in theory. It was rooted in my narrative history, beginning with my own family experience and gradually unfolding, guided by patterns that became evident during my doctoral experience. This inquiry, like Paley's (1995), was grounded in the desire to understand my experience of trying to teach preservice teachers about diversity through service learning. Designing it, therefore, began with recognizing the importance of personal experience in exploring the complexities of learning about diversity.

When I returned to university to undertake doctoral studies, I expected to emerge with the knowledge that would help me solve problems I saw in my teaching practice. As I progressed through the program and began to narrow my research focus, the pressure to position myself within a theoretical perspective and research methodology made me feel uneasy because so many of them offered little opportunity to highlight the centrality of my lived experience. I resonated strongly with Coles (1989), who felt caught between the

Call of Theory and the Call of Story, competing treatment perspectives embodied by the two supervisors mentoring his studies in psychiatry.

Designing my inquiry was also informed by the perspectives of several educational theorists who shared and reflected critically on their own experiences of learning to teach and/or learning about diversity (Barton, 2000; Carson & Johnston, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 1995a; Paley, 1995; Téllez, 2002, 2004; Téllez, Hlebowitsh, Cohen, & Norwood, 1995). From their writings, I learned why studying about culture on a theoretical level can be experienced as very distancing and tends to turn people away from learning about each other. I was also inspired by researchers who wrote of learning about teaching and culture through narrative and dialogue (Florio-Ruane, 2001; Hollingsworth, 1994; Huber & Clandinin, 2005; Vinz, 1996, 1997), and others who wrote of the need to move beyond traditional teacher education classrooms (Barton, 2000; Téllez, 2002, 2004) and engage preservice teachers as co-researchers in such spaces (Boyle-Baise, 2002). On the basis of ethnographic assignments asked of his undergraduate students conducting work in urban schools, Téllez (2004) believes that student culture cannot be *studied* by preservice teachers as it can be by anthropologists. Simply working in diverse schools is not enough to learn about other cultures because "schools tend to flatten students' home culture, making it difficult for an outsider to acquire much about any culture except 'school' culture" (p. 48). I resonated with his conclusion that "forays into urban and culturally diverse world for a week or a month" (Téllez et al., 1995, p. 75) are no substitute for interacting with people from diverse cultures; they may actually reinforce dangerous stereotypes some preservice teachers bring into the teacher education program.

Across these multiple perspectives, I saw connection in the recognition that to think about a topic critically, it helps to be "touched emotionally by it" (Florio-Ruane, 2001, p. 7). I also saw an affirmation of the educative value of narrative as individual experience rather than the illustration of theories. And so, following Paley's (1995) lead, I turned back to my story of experience, this time with a researcher's eye. My inquiry began with reading my own story of teaching as text, as a way to open up a field of inquiry. Vinz (1997) wrote about this link:

> an opportunity…to face ourselves as teacher educators, and in so doing, dwell in the gaps between who we are as teachers and where we locate ourselves when we are trying to help others learn more about teaching. (p. 138)

The guiding principle in narrative inquiry is to keep a narrative view of experience lived out on storied landscapes as both the theoretical conceptual and methodology frame. Narrative inquiry is derived from a Deweyian view of experience that calls for attention to *continuity, situation*, and *interaction.* This fit well with my story of experience, as I learned through the identity memo activity. Using these three key terms, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) provide a research framework which allows inquiries to evolve within a metaphorical 3-dimensional inquiry space. Studies have a contextual dimension in that they attend to a person's experience in context (*situation*); they occur in a specific place or sequence of places with attention paid to specific contexts in relation to the larger ones. As well, studies have a temporal dimension (*continuity*) that allows for backwards and forwards movement of participants and researcher along a temporal dimension. Inquiries revisit the past to understand the present and imagine the future. Relationship is key to what narrative inquirers do; studies also have an interactive dimension (*interaction*) as participants and researcher travel inward toward the personal and outward toward the social dimensions of learning and identity formation. A narrative inquirer works within this 3-dimensional space not only with the participants but also within him or herself. Narrative inquiry offers an opportunity to focus on the way events can shape the way we understand ourselves and serves as both methodology and phenomenon of inquiry.

In narrative thinking, the interpretive pathway between action and meaning is mapped out in terms of narrative histories of experience. Deep learning, that is to say the kind of learning that leads to embodied and therefore lasting knowledge, comes from experience. But experience alone is not enough. Dewey (1938) believed it was important to reflect on experience in order to understand its meaning. Building on Dewey's metaphor of education as reconstruction of experience, Clandinin and Connelly (1992) conceptualize teacher education as reconstruction involving reflection on lived experience in relationship with people over time. Central to their philosophy is the idea of life as composition (Bateson, 1989; Vinz, 1996), a life-long process of living, telling, re-telling, and re-living stories as an ongoing sense-making activity. Attending to the storying and restorying of lives in relation to curriculum helped Clandinin and Connelly (1992) shape a narrative understanding of identity as *stories to live by*, a term they derived which provides a way to see how people's knowledge, context, and identity are linked and can be understood narratively (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Huber & Clandinin, 2005).

Thinking of my life as composition helped me understand how my knowledge of diversity evolved. Composing and sharing my story made visible my own stories to live by. I also became aware of the ways my identity had been shaped in relation to other people's stories to live by. Unsettling experiences in the presence of Evelyn and Chris opened my eyes to the fact that learning from experience can sometimes be so deep, so embodied, as to keep one sound asleep to the stories of others. I began to wonder about the importance of intentionally interrupting or disrupting our stories to live by as a way to engage reflection about the self in relation to others.

Reflecting closely on my narratives of experience helped me see the complexities of identity formation. I came to understand that my thinking about diversity did not begin in a formal category based on culture, economics, religion, language, exceptionality, or sexual orientation. The fact that I seemed to have both minority and majority perspectives within my identity convinced me of the importance of understanding identity as stories to live by within which there could be several microcultures, the specificities of which defy representation by any single category of difference. Viewing my life as stories lived, told, retold, and relived allowed for such complexities to surface and be recognized. It compelled me to heed the Call of Story and begin this inquiry with an exploration of my participants' lived experience of diversity.

> What ought to be interesting…is the unfolding of a lived life rather than the confirmation such a chronicle provides for some theory. (Coles, 1989, p. 22)

The Research Puzzle

With an eye to the contextual, temporal, and relational importance of learning about diversity, I decided to explore four preservice teachers' stories of how they came to know diversity and how that knowledge shifted or was restoried through a service learning experience with children in communities unfamiliar to them. My purpose was to develop a way to understand how they had constructed the knowledge of diversity they brought into their teacher education program and see whether encountering children from diverse backgrounds in certain contextual, relational, and temporal conditions might shift their knowing of diversity. I wanted to continue learning about my experience, re-searching it by studying the experience of others.

Shaping a Borderland Narrative Inquiry Space

The use of metaphors enables people to see patterns in their lives and where there is pattern, there can be a framework for meaning (Bateson, 2000). Early in my doctoral journey, I resonated with the idea of learning about others by crossing borders (Giroux, 1992) because of what I experienced with the focus group of students representing multiple cultures at Faculté Saint-Jean. I was also drawn to the metaphor of the threshold; it represented a special place in my teaching practice. Much of my current thinking about diversity was informed by standing on the threshold of my classroom in schools and guiding preservice teachers as they negotiated the transition from the university classroom to their field experiences. As I looked back over the personal and professional landscapes of my life, however, I realized that neither crossing borders nor standing on the threshold could adequately represent my experience. I became aware of the importance of *in-betweenness*, a space more metaphorical than physical that had and continues to exert a powerful influence on who I am today, how I read the world and why I so profoundly wish to build a better understanding of diversity in preservice teachers. I began to think of this space of in-betweenness as a borderland. I felt this more adequately represented my experience than the other two metaphors, which held a sense of temporariness. It helped me think about the way I had learned about myself in relation to others through reflection over time and I wanted to create the same conditions for my research participants.

Nelson (2003) represents the borderland as a bridge on which two people, having left familiar environments, meet; not for the purpose of reaching a pre-determined destination, but rather to explore the other and themselves in relation to the other. This image contributed to my understanding of Anzaldúa's (1999) idea of borderland as a liminal space, one she sees as both a site of struggle and a place of possibility. The borderland metaphor also helped me connect with narrative inquiry as a process of story-telling and retelling and overlapping lives. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) understand narrative inquiry as a process which gradually clarifies itself in relationship between self and others. Until that clarification happens, the sense of in-betweenness is understood and valued as an important part of the process. For all these reasons, the borderland provided a useful metaphor to represent the inquiry space I wished to create for this study. My goal in shaping a borderland space was to deliberately open up a liminal space, both physically and metaphorically. In a physical sense, it would provide experiential contact with children's diverse lives in a context situated outside both school and university. In a metaphorical sense, it would provide the opportunity for my participants to inquire into their experience as a way to connect this unfamiliar experience to their familiar lived experience in a collaborative relationship over time.

Connecting with Children's Lives through Community-based Service Learning

Shaping my inquiry began with opening up a new field-based context in which my participants could engage with children in communities of diversity. Situated as it is near the end of the teacher education program and permeated as it is with a technical, outcomes-driven focus, the practicum field experience does not allow for the kind of long-term contact with difference I believed to be necessary to explore the complexities of diversity and multiple cultures. I felt that the service learning component integrated into the introductory educational foundations course at Faculté Saint-Jean offered a possibility for a borderland provided I could make some important changes.

All of the previous service learning placements had been in schools or outreach educational programs where students volunteered as tutors and helpers. I was aware that the kind of engagement and relationship that was possible there was shaped, to a great extent, by the institutional narrative of school. With a view to providing dispositioning contexts for this inquiry, I sought service learning placements outside traditional school settings. My intent was to enable my participants to interact with children in the context of their everyday lives. I felt this would provide valuable insights into the ways the children had come to live and tell their own stories to live by. Second, meeting children in a context outside school would allow my participants to step away from the scripted stories of school and engage with children as children, rather than as students in a classroom context. I hoped, in this way, their attention would be focused on the children, and not on a particular subject matter. In choosing to situate my service learning in the out-of-school settings of youth clubs, I was intentionally placing my participants in environments they would find unfamiliar, both because of the children's diverse backgrounds and because of the informal interaction they would have with them. I knew this would create moments where their stories to live by would bump up against children's stories to live by. I would pay close attention to the way my participants experienced this dispositioning environment.

Connecting with Lived Experience through Inquiry-based Learning

In planning my inquiry space, I also wanted to open up a new context for my research participants to inquire into their experience of engaging with diversity through service. I wanted to reconnect service to learning as a way to avoid the peeking across borders experience that feeds the perpetuation of the *us* and *them* mentality so evident in Chris' comments. In shaping a borderland for this study, I wanted to open up a space of inquiry in which my participants could reflect on their knowledge of diversity before, during, and after their service learning experience. The inquiry began with having them explore their family and school experiences to understand their stories to live by. It also involved having them explore the dispositioning moments that emerged when their stories to live by bumped up against the children's stories to live by. My goal in shaping this inquiry was to have my participants focus on these moments of tension through collaborative reflection, allowing their stories to overlap with other participants' stories and mine. I also wanted to revisit their stories to live by once the service learning experience was finished. By creating an inquiry-based service learning experience, I hoped to open the possibility of having them revisit their stories to live by in relation to diversity and learn to tell new ones.

Research Participants

I began this investigation the same way I did the pilot study[6]. Participants were sought among preservice teachers enrolled in the winter term of the introductory educational foundations course mentioned earlier. In presenting my study, I explained that it was designed to extend the service learning component into a 4-hour per week engagement over the 13-week university term. I would also engage them in regular off-site reflective activities in a mutually agreed-upon location outside the research and university settings. I explained that I was hoping to find three participants, my pilot participant having asked to remain involved for the main study. I explained that there would be no connection between my study and their coursework save the fact that they would be credited the 12 hours of volunteering and, as per the syllabus, they would be expected to hand in a reflective paper to their course instructor. I also spoke of the need for confidentiality in regards to the service learning sites and the children they would meet and that only the course instructor would be told where their placements would take place. At the conclusion of my presentation, I left an overview of my study with them, drawing attention to my contact numbers and inviting them to contact me by e-mail or telephone if they were interested in joining me as co-researchers in a project exploring preservice teacher education in relation to diversity. I called it a *learning adventure*.

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[6] I describe the pilot study in a section entitled *The Cooking Club as Borderland.*

Five students contacted me over the next two days and I met each of them individually. During informal conversations over coffee, I asked them to tell me about themselves, their family and school experiences, their current program of study as well as what drew them to the study. Three students were chosen on the basis of schedule flexibility and fit with the service learning site. No attempt was made to achieve demographic representation in the selection of participants. Rather, this study was designed to begin with each teacher's individual experience irrespective of cultural, linguistic, or social background. As Caucasian women from middle-class backgrounds, all four participants could be said to be representative of a predominantly mainstream preservice teaching force. In late January of 2004, Thea, Jorane, and Aurora joined Monique[7] to become the four participants with whom I entered the research sites.

Research Sites and Nature of Engagement

River Heights Youth Club

River Heights Youth Club, where I had conducted my pilot study, is an after-school community drop-in club located in an ethno-culturally diverse, low-income housing complex in the outer reaches of the inner city. The youth club draws a fairly equal representation of children from 6 to 17 years of age from Aboriginal, immigrant (primarily from African families), and Caucasian families. On any given day, between 25 and 40 children drop in to the club which is open between the hours of 3 and 8 p.m.

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[7] Pseudonyms for parties and sites have been inserted to respect confidentiality.

Monique, Thea, and I volunteered to spend four hours a week at River Heights Youth Club with children and youth between the ages of 6 and 17 as well as a director, a social worker, and two employees. From 3 p.m. onward, children and youth arrived from their various schools, hung up coats and knapsacks before busying themselves with activities that included crafts, video, computer and board as well as outdoor games. Older youth typically congregated for a short while on couches in the main room before heading outdoors or retiring to a teen room located upstairs. As children entered, their names were checked off on a roster [8] and they went off to their chosen activity until 5 p.m. when they gathered in the art room (which doubled as an eating area) for a hot meal. Meals were prepared by a staff member in the kitchen, which was a shared facility belonging to the community day care centre located next door. Youth club members were expected to take turns helping with meal preparation and clean up. Following the meal they participated in club activities such as The Hockey Club, The Friendship Club, and The Angels Club until closing at 8 p.m.

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[8] Membership in the youth club was required for attendance and this involved having a registration form signed by a parent. The roster enabled staff to track attendance in order to plan meals and secure sufficient funding to meet the needs of the community.

Meadowview Youth Club

During the pilot study at River Heights, I met a club employee who also worked part-time in another youth club. He mentioned that the Meadowview Youth club was also located in what could be considered as the outer inner city and that it attracted a high proportion of Aboriginal teens. In early February, Jorane and Aurora, who had both expressed an interest in teaching junior high, began their service learning placement there.

Meadowview Youth Club was housed in a spacious modern concrete building with large windows and a high ceiling. The main doors opened to a large games room opposite the director's office. Towards the back room, a hallway led to several smaller rooms: a kitchen, a children's playroom, a TV room, and at the very end of the hall, a teen room complete with dance surface, disco ball, and couches. At the far end of the club was the social worker's office. The second floor of the building was occupied by several offices leased to social agencies that ran community activities on weekday mornings. Meadowview was located next to a large junior high school from which it drew the majority of its members. Younger children from the neighbourhood attended as well, and on some days, a group of elementary-aged children was bussed in from a nearby school. On any given afternoon, there could be up to 50 children and youth moving in and out of the club and through its various rooms. In addition to the director and social worker, there were typically three employees present each night.

Meadowview differed from River Heights both in size and demographics. It attracted Caucasian and Aboriginal children and youth in fairly equal numbers and during our time there, we met few immigrant or Canadian-born children from other ethnocultural groups. Unlike River Heights, there were more teenage youth in attendance than elementary-aged children. For these reasons as well as the mandate it shared with River Heights of providing a drop-in after-school setting for children, I felt Meadowview constituted an appropriate second research site in which to explore diversity.

The Cooking Club as Borderland

Given the complexity of what I was trying to do in shaping a borderland inquiry space and my tentativeness in conducting collaborative research outside the school setting, I conducted a pilot study with one research participant from September until December 2003. In addition to providing the opportunity to negotiate entry into one of my eventual research sites, this preparatory investigation allowed me to experiment with both the nature and length of the service learning engagement as well as the forms of field texts.

I knew at the outset that trying to conduct this study within a limited time frame would be daunting. In the early weeks of the pilot study, my participant, Monique, and I were overwhelmed with the challenge of connecting with so many children in an environment so unlike school. We soon realized that some of the best conversations we had with them happened when small groups of children helped us clean up after the evening meal in the kitchen adjacent to the club. Monique spoke of feeling much more comfortable in a setting where

> the kids initiate the conversation when you're doing the dishes. You know, it's not us pulling at straws "Oh my God, what should I talk about?" The kids are just so much more open. (Individual conversation with Monique, Nov. 4, 2003)

We therefore decided to create and run a cooking club and every week after the evening meal, Monique and I invited up to six children into the kitchen to bake cookies which we shared with all club members just before closing time. This intimate setting provided an opportunity not only to bake with the children, but also to engage in conversations which enabled us to connect with their lives in ways that would not have been possible in the larger, busier, noisier main club room setting. I decided to create a cooking club in both research sites for this study because of the potential I saw in the pilot study for this borderland within a borderland to open up a space in which to connect more meaningfully with children and their lives.

Living in the Borderland

Composing Field Texts with Individual Participants

With a view to the temporal dimensions of the inquiry space, I engaged my research participants in narrative inquiry activities before, during, and after their service learning experience. Annals[9] and/or photographs provided a framework for an oral history or autobiographical conversation that took place before or shortly after the service learning began. Adding this to my initial coffee conversation notes, I was able to explore my participants' prior knowledge of diversity through their narratives of family, school, and social experiences leading up to the beginning of the inquiry.

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[9] One of the personal research methods described by Clandinin and Connelly (1994), an annal is "a line schematic of an individual's life divided into moments or segments by events, years, places or significant memories" (p. 420).

Throughout the service learning placement, my participants and I kept field notes. Bearing in mind that my research participants were full-time students in a teacher education program that used journals as a form of evaluation, I did not ask them to keep a research journal. I did, however, want to attend to the importance of providing my participants with reflective space and time to reflect on what they were experiencing. For this reason, I asked them after each service learning session to write field notes about what they noticed, thought, or wondered about and to share them with me by e-mail. In opening up this electronic connection, I was attempting to fit my request for field notes into their busy lives. I was also opening up the opportunity for dialogic involvement that would foster an ongoing, hierarchy-free, inquiry-rich relationship between us.

Returning to the temporal dimension of my narrative inquiry space, I conducted and taped follow-up autobiographical conversations with each participant once their time as student volunteers in the research sites had officially ended in late April 2004 at River Heights and late May 2004 at Meadowview. These conversations took place over a period of time, informally over the summer months and more formally in the context of final autobiographical conversations recorded in October 2004. My purpose was to explore with them what meaning they made of their experiences as a way to understand how their knowledge of diversity shifted over the course of their service learning placement and our work as co-researchers inquiring into it. Transcripts of these conversations as field texts allowed me to move back and forth between full involvement with participants and distance from them allowing me to "step out into cool observation of events remembered with a loving glow" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 83).

Composing Field Texts with Participants as a Group

This study was also grounded in a belief that learning about diversity is a relational process. Interrogating beliefs and shifting knowledge requires support and time. I had come to appreciate the power of response in sharing stories of experience and hoped to provide an interactive dimension of the inquiry space by tapping into the "wisdom that is born of the overlapping of lives, the resonance between stories" (Bateson, 2000, p. 242). Throughout the research process, I engaged my participants in sustained group conversations (Hollingsworth & Cody, 1994) which were recorded and transcribed. Transcripts of these conversations enabled me to pay full attention to what was being shared by the participants and were central to my analysis of the participants' evolving knowledge of diversity. Participants came together to explore their unfolding knowledge as it overlapped with co-researchers' perspectives both within and across sites.

Site-specific Group Conversations[10]

Site-specific group conversations took place as often as my participants' schedules would allow. I conducted and recorded five such conversations with Monique and Thea during their time at River Heights and three with Jorane and Aurora while they were at Meadowview. These site-specific meetings provided an opportunity for my participants and me to return to moments captured in our field notes. I looked forward to receiving my participants' field notes by e-mail to see what had caught their interest each week. Placing their field notes alongside mine, it was interesting to identify the moments that captured our respective or collective interest. These often involved moments where they, or I, bumped up against unexpected social or cultural narratives reflected in children's stories. During site-specific group conversations, our overlapping field notes helped us return to these moments and focus on how we were making sense of them in relation to our prior experiences. Sometimes, reflecting on our overlapping field notes directed our attention to certain aspects of the setting, events, or children's stories in preparation for our next time at the club. Returning to our overlapping field notes on a regular basis was like working with verbal "snapshots" as a form of artefact which allowed us to "to slow time to moments…that [could] be studied" (Bach, 2001, p. 8).

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[10] Conversations which took place with research participants will be referred to in one of three ways:
Individual conversation: between myself and one participant only
Site-specific group conversation: between myself and two participants in relation to one site
Cross-site group conversation: between myself and all four participants in relation to both sites.

Cross-site Group Conversations

On two occasions, I gathered all four participants for cross-site group conversations. These took place at the beginning and middle of April 2004. There was no further opportunity to meet as two of the participants returned home for the rest of the spring and summer. These cross-site group conversations took place over dinner, once in my home and once in the privacy of a tatami room in a Japanese restaurant. Given the size of the group, these conversations typically started out with a strong social tone and eventually turned to service learning experiences with each pair of participants relating stories to the other about their research site. Among other topics, I found the group conversations particularly insightful with respect to the way each site's service orientation was reflected in the words and actions of its directors, social workers, and employees as related by the participants.

Composing Field Texts with Community Participants

In response to Boyle-Baise's (2002) call to consider service paradigms and to share control with community participants in service learning experiences, the purpose of the inquiry was shared with the club directors and social workers, who were invited to join the inquiry as community partners. Although no formal parameters for their participation were put in place, they agreed to make themselves available to answer participants' and my questions throughout the inquiry and to share their observations regarding participants' presence in the club and interaction with children. We agreed that my participants and I would be introduced to the children and youth in both clubs as student volunteers who would be spending one evening a week with them for the next 13 weeks. In addition to including in my ongoing field notes what I learned from them through their presence and participation on site, I conducted and recorded informal interviews with community participants at the conclusion of the pilot and research studies. My purpose in soliciting the participation of youth club employees in this study was to determine whether, through the values and beliefs underlying their leadership, the club atmosphere reflected the community-building paradigm that was aimed for in shaping this study.

Interpreting and Representing the Borderland

Searching for Patterns

I began the interpretation process by gathering my preliminary coffee notes as well as the transcripts of each participant's autobiographical interviews in separate binders. I searched for plotlines in these documents that could serve as starting points in understanding each participant's stories to live by. To each of these plotlines, I assigned a coloured highlighter as a form of narrative coding. Reading through field notes and transcripts of each conversation, I highlighted passages I found significant either in helping me see the plotlines of their stories to live by, in representing dispositioning moments where their stories to live by bumped up against children's stories in the research site, or in constituting stories retold as a result of their service learning experience. I photocopied these passage pages for insertion into each participant's binder. While this colour-coded analysis initially provided a reassuring structure to me as a beginning researcher, it soon became problematic. For one thing, highlighted pages did not photocopy well. More importantly, as the inquiry progressed, my participants' experiences with diversity before, during, and after service learning became more complex. I began looking in new directions and shaping my inquiry in new ways. Although I continued to highlight passages, my colour-specific coding plan quickly ran out of hues with which to represent the richness of what my participants were experiencing. I learned to appreciate narrative movement at this point and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) words took on new meaning for me: "Narrative inquiry carries more of a sense of continual reformulation of an inquiry than it does a sense of problem, definition and solution" (p. 124).

While reformulating my inquiry made it more difficult to manage, it is, I believe, what allowed me to delve deeper into the complexity of identity formation and understanding what stories become part of those we choose to live by. Growth and change is such an important part of identity formation that it became important to allow my study to adapt and change to my participants' unfolding knowledge of diversity and themselves in relation to diversity.

Composing Interim Research texts

Over the summer months, I began drafting interim research texts. Using the story threads that emerged as patterns through the research process, I created autobiographical portraits for each participant. I also drafted borderland sketches in an attempt to capture the moments when each participant's stories to live by rubbed up against the children's and caused them to reflect on themselves in relation to others. I used their own words to reflect these moments of reconstructing meaning. I shared the autobiographical portraits and borderland sketches with each participant in late October 2004. My purpose in creating and sharing these interim texts was to make sure I was appropriately representing my participants' stories to live by as well as the moments that interrupted them. As we went over the autobiographical portraits together, they triggered additional stories which had not surfaced in our initial autobiographical conversation. I tape-recorded my participants' responses to both the autobiographical portraits and borderland sketches. Exploring their responses added new layers to my understanding of their unfolding story of coming to know and shifting their understanding of diversity through service learning.

Composing the Research Text

I knew the research text of this inquiry would constitute each participant's narratives of experience of diversity before, during, and after spending time in the borderland of their inquiry-based service learning engagement. I imagined my own stories being told alongside theirs as we all brought new meaning together to our understanding of diversity. While drafting my proposal, I was inspired by Nelson's (2003) exploration of four Canadian teachers' identities before, during, and after a cross-cultural professional development experience in Kenya in which she was also a participant. Her research text included a chapter entitled "Stories to live by" which related stories the teachers told of themselves before leaving for Kenya. Next was a chapter that related four stories selected from their time in Kenya entitled "Stories from the borderlands." This chapter was followed by one entitled "Stories to live by retold" which consisted of stories told by the teachers after their return. But as I returned to my field notes and transcripts in the light of what emerged from the final autobiographical conversations in October, I realized I would not be able to follow this format. My participants had connected in such different ways with diversity over time that I decided to represent each participant's storied experience as stand-alone chapters. Each of them would represent the story they told of themselves in relation to diversity prior to, during, and following their experience with service learning.

Multiplicity can be confusing, but it is also source of insight. Although the multiplicity of their lives did not allow me to represent my participants' stories told and retold in a single chapter, their individual stories brought insight to the whole (Steeves & McKenzie Robblee, unpublished). I wrote, shared, and negotiated their story chapters over a period of a year.

> I am one of those people who reflect most fully on experience with a sheet of paper or a keyboard. I find that I learn more from writing than from any other activity, because the process forces me to recycle experience, harvesting the learning from what I already know…learning to learn from experience, often by ruminating on past events and encounters and rethinking them. (Bateson, 2000, p. 229)

During this time, my participants and I remained in contact through e-mail and by meeting for an occasional coffee, sometimes together, more often individually. Feeling their presence during the writing process was an important part of helping me make sense both of their experience and of mine through theirs.

Navigating Tension in the Borderland

Ethics and Anonymity

Conducting a research study that involved sustained research conversations among participants who saw each other outside the research project posed a challenge for safeguarding confidentiality. I impressed on them the need to refrain from discussing their experience in class or sharing the names of their research site. I recognized that I alone had undertaken this ethical obligation but I felt the weight of responsibility I carried for them as well in fulfilling it.

I also felt the tension of conducting research with preservice teachers enrolled in a teacher education program with colleagues I knew. My ethical obligations did not make me comfortable spending as much time at Faculté Saint-Jean as I might have liked. I worried that while visiting the campus, I might run into and be greeted by one of my participants. Such an event could place us in compromising situations with respect to the confidentiality of our relationship and the research project.

Living with Liminality

I understood at the outset that engaging in qualitative research, in particular narrative inquiry, would be a process involving ambiguity, complexity, difficulty, and uncertainty. Having existed for so many years in an academic culture of timelines and results and trying to make this multi-site after-school research project work around the youth club realities and my family responsibilities did not make it a comfortable space for me, nor for that matter for some of my participants. The time frame for this research project was short and there were times when I had to resist my tendency to try to figure things out, which I owe in part to my personality and in part to my professional conditioning. It was important to live with liminality, to adopt a *works in progress* attitude and set aside any preset agenda in order to follow unexpected developments. I had to be respectful of my participants' lives and unfolding knowledge over time and on their terms, not mine.

There were other times when I had to refrain from an urge to shape responses, either my participants' or the children's, in relation to stories heard in the research site. I worried that an inappropriate response might compromise the chance of a child opening up to us about his or her lived reality in the future. I had to remind myself to step out of my well-ingrained teacher role and forego my natural instinct to maintain social cohesion in order to attend to rich research moments as a beginning researcher. It was not my place to bring a moral stance (Boostrom, 1994) to the research space but rather to pay attention to what I could learn about how participants were reacting and making sense of the moments lived out in the research site.

Relational Responsibility

Geertz (1983) likens the challenge of maintaining a dual role as both researcher and participant to attempting to study a parade of which we are a part. His analogy calls attention to logistical issues I faced around being both a participant observer and researcher while serving as a student volunteer. I was not able to make notes while volunteering alongside my participants. Once we began running the cooking clubs in each site, I was able to discreetly jot key words on the back of recipes when a child or participant's statement, action, or an event caught my interest. These jot notes served as placeholders to which I returned when drafting my field notes once I left the research sites.

Geertz's (1983) analogy also calls attention to the challenge of relational responsibility in conducting narrative inquiry. The co-construction, which is such an important part of narrative inquiry, is both a strength and a challenge. While it is important to establish and maintain a relationship of trust based on an ethic of care (Noddings, 1984) throughout the research project, opening my life to the scrutiny of others sometimes makes me, as a researcher, feel very vulnerable. There is also the need to step away from the closeness of the relationship in order to gain a more objective perspective in the interpretive move to research texts. I found these moments hard to negotiate. I worried that as I began to step away to compose research texts after having lived in such a close relationship with participants during our time in the youth club, they might think I was losing interest in their unfolding lives.

I felt similar tension as we entered and exited the research sites. When Monique and Thea returned home after their service learning project at River Heights came to an end in late April, I stayed on to volunteer through the month of May. I had grown attached to the children and did not want them to think, by having us all leave at once, that their lives were no longer important to us. I did not feel this tension as strongly at Meadowview. I had not been there as long nor had I had the opportunity to negotiate entry in the same way. The youth were less attached to us there than were the children at

River Heights, and Aurora had been hired to stay on through the summer as a club employee once Jorane and I stopped our service learning at the end of May 2004.

Finally, shaping a space for collaborative conversations in which all participants had equal opportunity to speak was challenging. I noticed that when all five of us met, one participant was less vocal and engaged than the others. I wondered if I should intervene in order to make space for her. I chose to let the conversations unfold but paid closer attention to what was not being said as well as what was being said. These moments of silence became an important part of her stories to live by.

And now, the stories. In the next four chapters, I explore each participant's knowledge of diversity as it was lived and told through narratives of a community-based service learning experience. Each story is told in three sections. The first of these sections lays out each participant's stories to live by. I identify a number of ways in which I think each participant's knowledge of diversity was shaped by early family, school, and life experiences. I refer to these as plotlines, which I see as threads that run through their lives and which, when woven together, make up the fabric of their stories to live by in relation to diversity. This knowledge is of particular interest to me as a starting point for this study because it is the knowledge each of the participants took with her into the service learning experience. Next, I tell each participant's experience of service learning by sharing moments lived in the borderland that interrupted her stories to live by. Finally, I explore how each participant's knowledge in relation to diversity shifted or was restoried in the borderland of service learning and I offer these as stories retold. I begin with Monique's story because it was with her that I began this project and first entered River

Heights. I follow her chapter with Thea's, given their shared experience of River Heights. The sixth and seventh chapters relate Jorane's and Aurora's stories respectively, reflecting their shared experience of service learning at Meadowview.

CHAPTER 4: MONIQUE'S STORIES TO LIVE BY

Stories Told

Connection to Family, Tradition, and Community

In preparation for our first autobiographical conversation, Monique mapped out some significant moments in her life. She also brought a few photographs of significant events and I noticed that most of these took place in a family setting or involved family members. As she described them, Monique's tone of voice, facial expression, and occasional outbursts of laughter spoke of a closeness and connection to her family that seemed to be a part of who she had become at that moment. I remember one photograph in particular, in which 50 or so family members spanning four generations were gathered on a relative's lawn for a celebration. Monique seemed to welcome me into the family fold as she introduced me first to her immediate family and then to each of her mother's eight siblings by family grouping, pausing to situate each cousin in relation to herself and her own siblings both in age and geographic location. I found it interesting that most of her extended family still lived within the same prairie province.

Monique remembered family gatherings as having been a constant throughout her childhood. They typically occurred around holiday traditions such as Pysanka and religious events such as baptisms, first communions, confirmations, and weddings. Even funerals held a special tradition in her family, which Monique explained as she pulled out a photo she had received a month after her grandfather's passing. Each cousin had received a similar gift. The depth of her relationship with her grandfather and her sense of loss following his death were evident in the quiet request she made that I handle this particular photograph with great care. As Monique shared these moments with me, it was clear that maintaining relationship was important in this large, extended family, even under the most unusual circumstances:

> That's again another example of my mom's family is so intent, like they drove Grandma to see her cousin, they didn't even care, it's a long drive to go for two nights…she [my mom] and my aunt drove my grandma to visit my grandma's cousin and then they drove to where I was and where my sister had come down…So me and my mom and my auntie and my sister all got to see each other. Like meet up in (name of city)…none of us lives there and this is where we're meeting up. (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004)

As I listened, I was reminded of my own grandmother with whom I had enjoyed a very special connection. I remember how I loved spending time watching her knit, admiring the way her pinky ring flashed as her knitting needles clicked and the charms on her bracelet tinkled in time with each stitch. She told me the story of each charm on her bracelet and I remember how I enjoyed handling each one trying to remember the person or significant event it represented. I also remember my grandmother's hands at rest, quietly folded and draped with a rosary as she rocked gently in her chair, her eyes closed in prayer. Those were the times my siblings and I knew to walk quietly past her door. It was not in our interest to interrupt her daily regimen of prayers that included blessings for us as well as special requests for help on upcoming exams that she would collect and pass along on our behalf.

My connection to my grandmother was also tied to traditions. Every spring, she would travel from Jasper to spend a month with us and we in turn visited her every Christmas and Easter. My grandmother was one of only two relatives who were part of my life growing up in Alberta. Unlike Monique, who had grown up surrounded by a large extended family, my extended family on both sides lived in Quebec. Although my parents remained connected with them by telephone and occasional trips, family visits were a rare event. In the absence of extended family, we grew up as a very close nuclear family and came to look upon close friends in the community as family.

This was also true for Monique who came to the research project positioned within a strong sense of community often created with friends outside the family fold. Monique recalls living in one city where neighbours gathered monthly for celebrations.

> Our neighbours…are absolutely amazing. They are like another whole family because there was one, two, three, four, five, I'd say seven households and we got together every month to celebrate the month's birthdays or we had potlucks or we had brunches or…every year we had our Christmas party. We'd all just sit out front, and have coffee in the summer time. And that's really important to my parents to have good neighbours because they're always about community and they had their church community and then they have their friends' community you know family and everything…those are really important to my family…Yeah, we were the new family so they all came over you know brought muffins. Oh pleased to meet you blah, blah, blah. And then next thing you know, we're all really close. (Individual conversation, Feb. 19, 2004)

Just as, in the absence of family, my siblings and I had come to think of family friends as relatives, Monique and her family established close connections with people in the community. And these connections would become valuable over the years; Monique grew up the daughter of a banker, who would be called upon to represent the bank in areas of the country where bilingual skills were valued.

Disruption and Struggling to Belong

By the time Monique reached high school, she had moved with her family six times. She recalled how she grew to dread the *family meetings* that heralded each imminent move and how she resented the confusion and disruption she felt each time she had to leave family and/or friends behind.

> I was only 11 years old but I knew something wasn't right. I'll never forget that afternoon when my mom announced we'd have a family meeting. My older brother took off on his bike because he knew what that meant. So my parents and the three of us kids sat around the table. My dad announced we'd be moving to a Maritime province. I had tears in my eyes even if I didn't know what it meant or where it was. Two months later, I had to say goodbye to my friends. But even worse was saying goodbye to my godmother and my godfather who had become my second family. I cried so hard that day…My mom was so sad to leave the prairies but because of my dad's job, we had no choice…you have to understand that having a bilingual dad as a bank manager meant moving a lot. I guess my older brother had already figured that out. By the time I was 11, I had lived in

> three different cities. I hated moving but this move was worse than the others because my entire family on both sides lived on the prairies. (Excerpt from course paper, Oct. 2003, Participant-approved translation by researcher)

At 11 years of age, Monique and her family moved to a small town in a Francophone region of the Maritimes known as Acadia. She soon discovered how different this region was from her home province. To begin with, having an Anglophone mother set her family apart from every other in this Acadian community.

> My mom didn't speak French so my mom was like very, very much singled out…other than two families and the ladies at the bank, my mom had no friends there because she was ousted for only speaking English. (Individual conversation, Feb. 19, 2004)

Another difference that quickly became obvious at school was that Monique's spoken French was different from that of the other children and they began making fun of her. Describing herself as desperate to fit in, she quickly learned to change her accent.

> Everyone in the class was Acadian, including the teacher and I arrived speaking the French I had learned from four years of French Immersion schooling. I was different from day one. You also have to understand that people from this region rarely move and rarely have people move into their community. I was only 11 years old so I adopted their language and accent. (Excerpt from course paper, Oct. 2003, Participant-approved translation by researcher)

Monique learned she needed to do more than shift her accent as she faced the challenge of trying to make friends in this very tight-knit community. To forge a place for herself among these long-standing friendships, she felt a need to shift the way she interacted with people. She remembered becoming something of a class clown to secure the attention she sought from her peers.

> I was timid at first because I didn't want them to mock my French. But you don't make friends in silence. So I started to clown around and even if the teacher didn't like it, at least I knew I had attracted spectators. During recess, the girls would come and talk to me and after a while, I had friends. (Excerpt from course paper, Oct. 2003, Participant-approved translation by researcher)

Although her mother's acceptance in this community remained conditional at best, Monique succeeded in making friends and eventually came to enjoy her life on the East Coast. She experienced both academic and social success. She was, therefore, devastated some two years later when she was summoned to another "family meeting" and learned the family would be moving back home (or at least to a different city within their home province).

> I was so disappointed to be moving again after I'd worked so hard to make friends. I remember telling my parents that it wasn't worth meeting anyone because I'd eventually have to leave them. (Excerpt from course paper, Oct., 2003, Participant-approved translation by researcher)

In her new city, she experienced the same sense of displacement and had to repeat the process of struggling and shifting to fit in. She remembered feeling anger towards her parents for disrupting her life yet again.

> When we lived in the Maritimes, I was clearly the odd man out. I didn't speak like them, I didn't have their history, I wasn't Acadian. I wasn't this, I wasn't that, I wasn't this, I wasn't that. My mom was Anglophone. And then to move back from there…it was like odd man out again because now my French…wasn't like the French here so I was the odd man out until I got back my French and I was like OK, now I'm back in. So you know I had to change myself, it's not like I had all these people approaching me saying let's be friends. (Site-specific group conversation, Apr. 6, 2004)

As I heard Monique describe her struggle, I wondered how she had coped with the physical, academic, and social disruptions these back-to-back moves created in her life. She spoke of developing an "attitude."

> So I was in FI[11] Grade 7 when I moved back and it just so happened that my Grade 7 teacher was also from…my dad's small town…and he was really good about the move and about me not belonging or fitting into the class. Grade 8 year, the teacher and I had quite the personality conflict. I remember almost getting kicked out of that school probably four or five times because I hated him…I had the biggest attitude all the time…my mom always told me, I had an attitude but I think part of my attitude was from all the moves. It was my way of dealing with this move and, my sarcasm too. (Individual conversation, Feb. 19, 2003)

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[11] FI refers to French Immersion, a program designed for Anglophone students where French serves as both target language and language of instruction for other subjects.

Just as she had become a class clown to make friends in Acadia, she began taking on a more active social role, to the point of being characterized as a *ringleader* by a junior high teacher.

> I think well, I started excluding people to be not more popular, but you know to get in with the people…because we were always moving you know what I mean? Like I didn't have a core group in one centre…I had friends…like all over the map so finally when we moved, I was getting made fun of and excluded because of my accent. And then in Grade 8 there was a new girl that moved in, so…she was now the new kid right? So it was like, ooh I can get in and have friends if we exclude her. Do you know what I mean? And I was called a ringleader in Grade 8 which really hurt my feelings. (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004)

As I thought of her struggling for social acceptance in this new community, I wondered if Monique's decision to take on this role within her peer group might have been a protective measure, adopted consciously or unconsciously to circumvent the possibility of her own exclusion. I thought of her living out a cover story (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995), tucking her insecurity behind a façade of certainty and deliberately crafting a social space she suspected wouldn't otherwise be available to her.

I was reminded, in this respect, of my own experience of growing up Francophone in an Anglophone environment, of feeling different and trying to fit in with my friends at school. In the days before FI and Francophone schools, I attended a bilingual school that brought together both Anglophone children learning French as a second language and Francophone children. For many of my Francophone friends, French was no longer necessarily the dominant language spoken within the home. Having been raised by parents who always spoke French at home, I was, therefore, more fluent than most of my peers. But I remember wanting to fit in more than anything and shifting my accent at school to do so. This cover story worked well at school but created problems for me at home. I remember taking phone calls from my friends out of earshot of my parents and siblings so they would not hear my *school accent*. I constructed and lived out an identity which was neither completely representative of my home environment nor my school environment, but somewhere in between. In her depiction of the immigrant or exile experience, Hoffman (1989) speaks of the way individuals learn eventually to cope as "resident aliens" (p. 221) never quite fitting into one or the other of the original or adopted identities they carry. Her words seem to resonate with both Monique's experience of moving between provinces and feeling at home in neither, as well as my own experience of shifting across identities between home and school.

Prior Experience with Special Needs

As Monique continued to tell her story, she drew my attention to a photograph of herself surrounded by several aunts at a birthday party. She identified each of them and then spoke of the special connection she has with her mother's sister, Auntie Clara. She explained that her aunt has Down's Syndrome and told me with pride and fondness about the meaningful life her aunt crafted for herself with the support of family and community. Monique felt that her aunt's presence in her life had made her more sensitive to difference.

> I think because we have a special needs person in the family I'm very, very sensitive to that…Auntie Clara and I get along really, really well…And she still lives with my grandma because she can't function on, like, the only other option would be a group home...So she just lives with my grandma. Which anyway it works out fine because she's responsible for certain things, just little things that she likes to control and give her some responsibility, like dishes, she'll do the dishes. She does laundry and she buys the soap, likes to take care of certain little things that are her little domain in the house. And she doesn't work, she volunteers at lots of places. So right now she is volunteering at a little vet clinic…and she also volunteers at the hospital and that's really funny because she brings files from floor to floor when they move patients and they've told her at the hospital that what's in those files is confidential so when my mom asks her "How's work?", she says "That's a closed subject" because she doesn't think she can talk at all about work (laugh). It's like seriously the funniest thing. (Individual conversation, Feb. 19, 2004)

Monique's respect and fondness for her aunt were evident in her words. I thought about how closely Monique must have observed her aunt over the years to become so sensitive both to her needs and challenges and to the way they were accommodated in a manner which allowed for her meaningful inclusion both within her home and work environments.

As she spoke of her aunt, I found Monique very sensitive to my needs as a listener; every so often, she interrupted her narration to add background information to help me understand her aunt's actions and reactions. It was as if, for my benefit, she was switching back and forth between her *insider* perspective, as a person who had intimate knowledge of and could completely identify with her aunt, to an *outsider* perspective for the benefit of a listener who had never met her. In that regard, I was reminded of Lugones' (1987) idea of world travel. It was as if by travelling to her aunt's world, by seeing the world through her eyes, Monique had come to understand persons living with Down's Syndrome, "what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes" (p. 17) and she wanted to share this understanding with me.

Lugones (1987) also speaks of loving perception as the ability to identify with those who are not like us. Monique enjoyed spending time with her aunt and, through her extensive involvement with her, came to know her world. She learned to see things from her perspective, to identify with her. She was also able to bring the same loving perception to other persons with disabilities and she sought opportunities for involvement with them outside the family fold. During her high school years, Monique volunteered to work with special needs youth through a Christian Ethics class as well a Physical Activity for Active Living program (PAALS). These involvements brought opportunities to work with youth living with Down's Syndrome, autism, and FAS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome). It was clear that her involvement went beyond what was expected. Just as she was comfortable spending time with Aunt Clara both in and out of her home, her connection to these children blurred the boundary between school and community.

> The kids that were there were phenomenal and there was a family of four, three of the four boys being special needs. One of the brothers was always one year ahead

> of me in school and my friend and I would take him and his brothers tobogganing, to the football games and they'd get so into it. Dave loved going to the football games…their mom used to come into IGA where I worked. I'd say: "How are the boys doing?" She'd say "Monique, they had so much fun." Like every time, because we'd take them out for hot chocolate and there'd usually be about two or three of us and then we'd bring four or five of them. (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004)

Monique's involvement with youth with special needs seemed to be grounded in a determined effort to ensure each of them had a place in the social world and was treated with the same respect as other individuals. And when she sensed they were not, Monique would respond on their behalf.

> One of my really good friends takes this one bus and because she lives near a group home, there are often people with special needs on the bus. One day, she came to school and she was like, "Oh my God, there were three Down's people on the bus." And I said, "What does that mean?" So she's like, "Well, three people with Down's" and I [said] "That's not what they're called! You don't just say 'three Down's. You could say 'three people with Down's Syndrome'." I was just totally offended. And she was like, "Oh, I'm sorry." It's not that I'm saying that everyone should be sensitive to the fact because maybe she doesn't have nearly as much experience with it and whatever, but I was just really offended that it sounded like she said Down's with a capital D. It wasn't people with, it was just like the big D, you know what I mean? And I wasn't personally hurt but I just

> thought she could have been more sensitive to the, that whole situation…She met [my aunt] after that point…and they're now really close but this was like in my third year before she had even met her. But I think once you do know someone personally, or whatever, you become very sensitized to it. (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004)

This story was interesting to me because it showed that Monique's commitment to making the world a more understanding place for people like her aunt carried more weight than her loyalty to one of her best friends. I wondered how many of her peers might simply have let an awkward moment pass rather than risk a friendship. The fact that she chose to respond to her friend's insensitivity spoke of the depth of her commitment to her aunt and other persons living with disability. It was as if Monique felt a responsibility toward them. Anzaldúa (1999) describes responsibility as the ability to respond and I thought of the way this seemed to be a guiding force in Monique's life.

In light of the decisiveness with which Monique took her friend to task for her remarks on the bus, I was surprised that on another occasion, in the presence of her brother, she reacted quite differently.

> I sometimes go and watch [my aunt] bowl on Saturdays…she bowls for Special Olympics and I like to go watch her...and she actually gets really excited when people go and watch her…Anyway, one week I said [to my brother] "Let's go stop in and say hi at the bowling alley…she'll be so excited to see us." And he said "OK" so we went and like, five minutes in there, he said "I can't stay here." I don't know if there's a barrier or something that he cannot interact with special

> needs people, other than Auntie Clara. I just knew he was uncomfortable. I could tell. "Monique we got to get out of here" and I was like "OK." So I said "Auntie Clara we're going to leave now, we've got some errands," because I think she would have been hurt to know why we were really leaving. So we just left and, no, I've never, we've never gone back with him. Like I've still gone back and watched her but never have I taken him again. And I don't think he's gone by himself. It's almost weird because we've all had the same exposure…I don't know why. It's not like it's a character flaw…but it was weird to see how he reacted considering the same upbringing and the fact that I think we should both be sensitized to it. But I guess what I'm sensitive to, he's not. You know which makes sense. I'm sure he's sensitive about a lot of things that I have no idea about. (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004)

Noticing her brother's discomfort, Monique chose to remain silent and they left the bowling alley together. I include this story to illustrate an interesting tension between two plotlines in Monique's life: connection to family and sensitivity to special needs. While Monique was at ease with Auntie Clara's world both in and out of the home, she seemed to recognize and accept that this was not the case for her brother. She was sensitive to how he experienced Auntie Clara differently, at least in regards to this social setting outside the home. I wondered what prompted Monique's decision to respond to her brother's needs over her aunt's at that moment. I remember her telling me of a time just after their move to the Maritimes when her brother had given her a friendship bracelet. This unexpected gesture of kindness had brought her much comfort at a very difficult time in her life. I wondered if quietly leaving the bowling alley was Monique's way of returning the gift of understanding to her brother by acknowledging his struggle and offering support. Remembering this moment with me, Monique did voice a wonder that, given their common upbringing, she and her brother had not developed the same degree of acceptance or comfort with people who shared Auntie Clara's disability. I was intrigued by the complexity in her pattern of responding on behalf of persons with disabilities.

Growing Up Beside *and* Hearing About *Aboriginal Families*

As she shared stories of her childhood, Monique also spoke of growing up beside and hearing about Aboriginal people. Raised by a Francophone father and an Anglophone mother, she identified herself as bicultural with Francophone roots. Throughout her childhood and adolescence, Monique attended FI schools and remembered having little contact with Aboriginal people.

> I will honestly say this from experience, there has never once been a Native student in any of my classes from Kindergarten until second year university…I remember being at a dual track school so all the Native kids that were at our school were in the English track. So I never came into contact with them. And still now I would say that my contact with Native people is very limited. (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 1, 2004)

Monique's last two sentences echoed my own experience growing up in the suburbs of Edmonton. For the first nine years of my education, I attended school at a

French-language convent located in the inner city. Travelling to and from school each day, I was aware of an Aboriginal presence in the neighbourhood. There were times when this presence was more noticeable. I recall how the nuns took me into their cafeteria one day when I had forgotten my lunch. To my surprise, I found a group of nuns assembling sandwiches for a long line of men I could see waiting outside the kitchen door behind the convent. I remember too as we jogged around the block during physical education class, there were sometimes men teetering on the sidewalk or slouched over in sleep. These images certainly contrasted with the historical image I was presented of Aboriginal life in school but I have no memory of thinking such thoughts at the time. Like Monique, I never shared a classroom or a personal connection with an Aboriginal person and I lived a very separate life once I left the school to go home each afternoon. Like Monique, I too had grown up "beside" and "hearing about" Aboriginal people, only peripherally aware of their problems of poverty, unemployment, and alcoholism.

If Monique had grown up constructing Aboriginal life as running on a parallel but separate track from her own, one event occurred that derailed her plans. In November 2003, she learned her father had been promoted and the family would be relocated to Pine Valley, a small town 3 hours away from her home. While Monique had fond memories of living there as a toddler, she spoke with emotion of the demographic changes that had taken place since then.

> So they call it a promotion but Pine Valley is just disgusting. Now that whole city is probably I'd say honestly 85% Aboriginal just because there's so many reserves surrounding it. We used to live in Pine Valley when I was I don't know maybe

> 3…and it wasn't like that then. I would say that within the last 10 years, it's totally turned into what you might call an urban reserve because there's so many Aboriginal people there…My parents moved there a month ago and no one has even come over to introduce themselves [to them]. (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2004)

Home and family had always been so important to Monique and I sensed how troubled she was about this turn of events. Since moving away to attend university, she jumped at every opportunity to go home. But home was no longer what it had once been for Monique. There was hesitation as she described tension between a desire to spend time with her parents and an equally strong desire to avoid spending time in their new *home* town.

Monique also shared her concern that the timing of the move to Pine Valley coincided with her mother's graduation from education. She was not entirely comfortable with the prospect of her mother beginning a teaching career in what she imagined would be a very challenging context.

> She's teaching Grade 9 Native Studies in a community school. Which would be considered…like totally inner city…90% Aboriginal in the school…And my mom's a Native Studies minor so I'm sure that helps. She mentioned that there are a lot of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome kids in the class. And you know I don't think she's dealt with that much. (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2004)

This was not the kind of environment in which Monique imagined starting her own teaching career. Unlike her mother who had done a minor in Native Studies, Monique had completed only one Native Studies course that was a required component for obtaining an undergraduate Humanities degree in her home province. She did not remember it as a positive experience.

> You're supposed to have six credits of social science and Native Studies is considered a social science so I decided to take that one…My seminar leader was whiter than me, blond hair, blue-eyed. She told us she was a Status Indian. I remember thinking I didn't get it. So we had seminar every two Fridays and she and I had a conflict. I didn't feel that her marking was just and she didn't express her expectations to the point that we would know, we were all failing all these little things that were assigned just to prove if we had read the articles. I've never failed anything in my whole life and I was like "Where do you get off? I've done all my readings. Ask me what they're about and I'll tell you."…So to me I did not have a great experience and I stopped going to class. My mom kept saying "Monique, I think you should be going to this class" and I'd say "you know what Mom? These people have a wealth of knowledge that they could be sharing and could be teaching." I wasn't learning anything in the class. And I could spend that hour doing homework and that's eventually what I did. (Individual conversation, Nov. 18, 2003)

Given her intention to teach in the FI program, Monique questioned the relevance of this Native Studies course. I remember sensing similar doubts among my students when I began teaching the introductory educational foundations course at Faculté Saint-Jean. Like Monique, these students were preparing to become Francophone or FI teachers and given that those programs, historically, did not attract many Aboriginal children, there was an unspoken doubt as to the need to become familiar with issues in education from an Aboriginal perspective. Like Monique, many of these students had grown up beside and knowing about Aboriginal issues. I sensed that many questioned the value of learning about the issues of a community with whom they were not likely to be involved on a professional basis.

Stories Interrupted in the Borderland

Entering an Unfamiliar Space

When Monique and I entered the youth club in October 2003, we were introduced to the children as new volunteers who would be spending one evening a week with them until Christmas. Monique remembered finding our early visits awkward as we tried to connect with the children and fit ourselves into established routines that were unfamiliar to us.

> You want to talk to them, you want to interact with them but you know some of those guys, like I don't even know where to begin. What kind of music do you like? You know and then they give me a name, I don't even know what that is. (Individual conversation, Nov. 4, 2004)

In an effort to learn names, Monique and I took over roster duties and tried to initiate conversations with children as they arrived. We participated in various club activities and looked for ways to become involved but before long, we noticed that while some kids were very interested in connecting with us, others were clearly not. This was an unfamiliar feeling for both of us. As a seasoned camp counsellor, Monique expressed surprise at the lack of interest shown for our comings and goings, particularly by the older children.

> maybe it's because they're always coming and going. You know it's not like it's "Where's…?" "Oh, they left." It's like "Well, whatever." No one's saying goodbye like it's a big deal. You get a "Ya, ya…if that!" You know or they'll just continue on their video game or their activity without even blinking an eye. (Individual conversation, Nov. 4, 2003)

As a seasoned teacher and parent, I was surprised by what I saw as I tried to find out about their day at school, their grade, or favourite subject. Before long, I realized that just as knapsacks were left at the club entrance, so too was any interest in talking about school; the topic remained remarkably absent from the landscape of this youth club. Their lack of interest in my questions made me acutely aware of the way school seemed to frame all my attempts to connect with these children and I set about consciously stripping away any reference to it in my attempts at conversation. It was difficult to change a pattern of interaction that had become so familiar to me. Monique and I both struggled, trying to negotiate a different way of interacting, trying to un-know (Vinz, 1997) what we knew about children in camp and in school in order to connect on this unfamiliar landscape.

In addition to un-knowing our familiar patterns of interaction, this service learning context also called on us to not know (Vinz, 1997) what was going to happen, to get used to experiencing the unexpected. When Monique and I entered the youth club, we were required to fit ourselves into a world with which the staff and children were familiar. We did not know names, family groupings, or personal and social histories of the children. Youth club rules were also largely unknown to us and as a result, our best-laid plans often fell flat. Unlike school where children enter our world, a world with which we are familiar, we were entering a very unfamiliar world and having to negotiate our way through it. For a practicing educator and a future teacher, this proved to be a very dispositioning experience.

I share one particular story to illustrate this dispositioning quality. Early on during our time on site, a 10-year-old girl I'll call Abigail asked me to help her with a paint-by-numbers project. As we sat down to work in the art room, several other children asked to join us. Abigail objected but I managed to convince her that it was possible for several people to work on different parts of the painting simultaneously and the kit, was, after all there for the benefit of all the youth club children. The group worked well for a time but, eventually, Abigail accused two children of deliberately sabotaging the painting. Tempers flared and angry words were exchanged. Unbeknownst to me, one girl ran home to complain after her attempt to join the project had been rebuffed by Abigail. Her mother's angry telephone call prompted the director to enter the room at that very moment to reprimand Abigail. Within moments, all the painters had either stormed off or scattered. Left alone with a mess to clean up and my emotions to unravel, I felt shell-shocked, inept, and dejected. I remember at that moment looking across the room at Monique, who also happened to be sitting alone in her corner of the art room with the remnants of a collage activity. A group of children had participated in her project for a time and then moved on. Looking at her in defeat, I shrugged my shoulders wondering how this had all come to pass. I remember how Monique shrugged back as if equally bewildered. When I commented that it was a good thing this had not happened in a classroom during her student teaching round, we both burst out laughing, enjoying a little humour before tackling the clean up. Later, as we discussed the art room disaster with the club director, we learned about the relationship histories among these children and we understood why things turned out as they did. As a result of this experience, it became clear that just because we planned an activity, we could not assume that the children would go along with it as they typically did in the structured and captive environment of the classroom. Evidently, we had to learn to fit ourselves into this unstructured space as best we could. This meant, once again, setting aside patterns of interaction more typical of school and camp in order to get used to "going with the flow."

River Heights provided Monique with an opportunity to experience youth club members' perspectives on parents and families. As she laid these perspectives alongside her own experience of family, she found herself bumping up against family patterns that did not fit her own. Although a number of moments and stories triggered wonders for Monique, three are chosen and shared to illustrate the dispositioning effect they had on the story she told of herself in relation to diversity.

Encountering Unfamiliar Parenting Styles

The Absence of Parents

Trish, a girl of 12 years of age and former youth club member, had dropped by the club one evening to visit a friend on the understanding that she would be sleeping over at her friend's house afterward. During Cooking Club, Monique learned that the sleepover plans had fallen through and Trish would have to walk home. (Trish had recently moved away from the housing complex and although the distance to her home wasn't known, Monique understood it to be quite far.) Worried for her safety, she suggested that Trish call her mother to arrange a ride home; she was surprised by her reaction.

> Trish said, "I'm not going to phone. I know the answer already." This seemed really weird to me. I mean I would rather go get my child and know she is safe than having her walk home by herself in a not so safe neighbourhood. And I couldn't meet her parents so I don't know the situation. I just remember thinking that's really weird that she couldn't, she knew if she phoned home, they would say no. But even at that, they could say I'll walk and come and get you. Like that's not that big of a deal to me but that's the thing, maybe these parents have so much else going on or maybe who knows, maybe they suffer depression, maybe they can't get out of bed, maybe I don't know what the issue is. If I go do an activity, my mom will come and pick me up when I call her for a ride. Trish couldn't count on the same support; that made me sad. (Individual conversation, Nov. 18, 2003)

Given the hour of the night and the cold weather outside, Monique found it hard to believe that Trish's parents would not come pick her up, even harder to believe that Trish would consider calling home useless. Laying her own experience of parental support for after-school activities alongside Trish's, Monique had difficulty accepting what she considered to be a glaring lack of parental involvement. She was tempted to step in to provide a ride but recognized that her position as volunteer and lack of knowledge about Trish's home situation precluded her from doing so.

> My initial thought was: I have a car; I should offer to drive her home. But she would be my responsibility if she got into my vehicle. I'm a volunteer, I can't take that responsibility on and if something were to happen I would totally be liable for that child and I don't even know the consequences of that being in this volunteer position so I just said "OK." She would have got home around 8 o'clock so she wouldn't have been home for supper and I just…like where the hell are the parents here? I don't get it, you know this whole lack of parental structure, social structure, structure of any sort. So these kids are almost like left to do their own thing and if they don't phone home to say what they're doing, at what point do the parents start to care? It's like the club is raising the kids. Again, I question where the parents are in all of this? (Individual conversation, Nov. 18, 2003)

Monique resigned herself to letting Trish walk home with the help of a flashlight and was left wondering whether she had made it home safely…wondering too about the place of parents in the lives of some of the children at the youth club. As a guest to the club that day, Trish did not return and there was no opportunity for Monique to explore her wonderings any further.

The Presence of Parents

While parents were, for the most part, absent from the youth club during our time there, there was one exception. In mid-November, Monique and I met Helen, a woman whose 13-year-old son, Dave, attended the club daily. By January, Helen had become a constant presence; we saw her every week and learned from the staff that she came most other days of the week as well, showing up even when her son did not. While she was friendly, Helen's presence and interaction with the kids in the club challenged Monique's story of parents and her expectations for the way they should be.

She commented on Helen's unusual parenting style, which she saw reflected in the way she addressed or spoke of her son.

> Today, she said "Where's my kid, no, child?", it's something like that…she didn't even use his name…Yeah, "come here my child." There's something weird about that…it's just I don't find her very nurturing I think is a good word. I really don't see that. And we were saying today like it's not a mean comment but I would be very embarrassed by her if I was her kid. (Site-specific group conversation, Feb. 25, 2004)

Monique found Helen's style impersonal and distant. In her experience, parents were nurturing towards their children and this was reflected in the way they addressed them.

As Helen began to spend more and more time at the club, she became part of the routine, and Monique found her behaviour particularly off-putting at mealtimes.

> You know she's eating out of the pot where it's supposed to be for the kids and she's having seconds and thirds you know sometimes even before the kids are. (Site-specific group conversation, Feb. 25, 2004)

In Monique's experience, parents gave over to children, ensuring their needs were met before their own. Parents typically also modelled good manners and taught them to their children. Monique found Helen lacking in both areas.

Monique understood the club to be a place where youth come to have their social needs met. Yet Helen's constant presence, even on days when her son was not present, made her wonder whether the club was serving that purpose for her as well. Given what she saw as a blurred boundary between Helen's presence as a parent/adult and/or member/youth, Monique was very surprised to learn some weeks later that the social worker and the director were considering creating a parent volunteer position for Helen. She found it hard to reconcile Helen's behaviour in the club with the increased level of responsibility she imagined this position to entail.

> She's always there but my thing with her is she doesn't take any initiative while she's there,...doesn't run anything and I'm not saying she should have to or she should do whatever but she's just pretty much like one of the kids in almost every sense. You know when you say "you can have seconds" or whatever she is like the first one in line...she tattles so much you almost wonder who's the kid and who's the parent...She'll come up to me and she'll say "Did you not just see

> that?" And I was like, "What happened?" She's like, "Well…so and so just punched someone." You know she'll come up and say, "That's not allowed in the club." So I say, "If you know that's not allowed, why don't you say something because you know the rules more than I do." So she knows the rules. She knows the new regulations that are put into place every two weeks when they change the rules. So why doesn't she take initiative and say to these kids, "That's not appropriate"? (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 1, 2004)

As Monique tried to make sense of this development, I shared what I observed and learned from staff members. It seemed they too initially found Helen's presence perplexing. Yet as the weeks wore on, her presence was not only tolerated—it seemed to be encouraged. One evening, as Helen headed home, complaining about the chores that awaited her there, the social worker invited her to join us at a table and jokingly remarked how much she would love to be sipping a tall fancy coffee at that moment. Apologizing that she couldn't supply coffee, Helen told her about some fancy tea she received in a gift basket and offered to run home and get it. Moments later, she returned with tea for the social worker and Monique as well as a chocolate wafer for me. Monique, who had been playing video games with the kids during this earlier conversation, was caught off guard when Helen approached her with the tea. She explained later that she felt awkward receiving a gift from Helen in front of the children.

> She asked me first, do I like raspberries…and she hands me this raspberry tea. Apparently she'd got that in a gift basket for Christmas and she didn't want it. And I wrote (in my field notes), "I wasn't sure how to react to this and I don't

> know why. I guess it seems strange to me that she was giving me something of hers instead of the other way around because she is way less well off than I am and yet she's giving me the tea." So to have this woman who's old enough to be my mom give me something totally out of context made me feel really awkward…And I felt like I didn't do anything to her or for her in particular to merit that either. Maybe just being there was enough for her. I really don't know but I felt uncomfortable. (Site-specific group conversation, Feb. 25, 2004)

If Monique was dispositioned by Helen's presence in the club, she was even more puzzled by her gift.

As the weeks went by, Monique began spending more time with Helen's son, Dave. They seemed to seek each other out in the club. Also, during our site-specific conversations, I noticed Monique was taking an interest in his interactions with the other children in the youth club. She noticed he often challenged other children and staff members and she wondered whether this pattern spilled over from his school experience.

> I think he's marginalized at school. It's obvious. Every single time at the club he's marginalized from every other kid and in turn, he does the same to the other kids which is sad but it's a learnt behaviour…He loses that sense of power. He gets bullied so he regains the power by bullying the younger ones. It's sad but I mean you see it in school. I mean, let's be honest. Kids do that all the time. I'm not saying it's right but it's learnt behaviour. (Individual conversation, Nov. 18, 2003)

It was as if she was trying to find a reason for Dave acting the way he did, trying to look past the behaviour towards the intention behind it. Monique also began paying close attention to Dave's interactions with adults. She sensed that he acted differently towards her than he did towards some of the other adults in the club and that she and Dave were developing a special relationship.

> So when we say, "we'll see you next Wednesday," the kids know we're there. And after six months of being there, they can trust when we say we are going to be there and some of the kids that I've come into contact with like and it's different than how the others behave. Like Dave for example at our site, he and I have this weird relationship. Like it just you know he doesn't talk back to me like he would [other staff] and yet it's friendly…I don't know, I feel like we're, we're honestly friends. Like it's really different how he interacts with me compared to how he is with other people. (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 1, 2004)

> Dave and I really connect. I don't know why, I don't know on what grounds…he respects me, like I said I don't know why. It's not like I've ever done anything or said anything but he, he just respects me. (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 18, 2004)

As Monique's relationship with Dave grew closer, I began to notice a corresponding shift in her attitude towards Helen. The comments she made about her seemed to soften over time. Although she recognized that Helen did not parent in what she considered to be a conventional way, Monique learned that when it really counted, Helen did put Dave's needs ahead of her own. And while her manner towards her son was not nurturing, she saw Helen's affection for him reflected in small gestures she made on his behalf whenever opportunities arose.

> But I really do think she cares about Dave but her approach to parenting is just none that I had seen ever before. And I think I had to get used to that whole thought process that maybe she doesn't stay at home and bake him cookies and do homework with him every day after school and bring him to soccer but she does buy him treats when she can and she does want to show him fun things and take him on trips so I guess she is making an effort no matter how small it is. (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 18, 2004)

Monique initially found Helen's presence awkward. But through her connection to Dave and the opportunity this brought to connect with his life at home, she began to see Helen in a different light. She began to rethink the dishevelled, socially needy parent she once saw as "a little off-balance" (Individual conversation, Dec. 6, 2003) when she entered the youth club. Towards the end of our time there, she was referring to Helen as a different but "interesting parent" (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 1, 2004).

Encountering an Aboriginal Family Story

Although she spoke of growing up beside and hearing about Aboriginal families in her home province, Monique had never interacted personally with any people of Aboriginal heritage. The youth club provided a first opportunity to so. Very early in our service learning, I met Faith, an Aboriginal girl of 9 years of age. One day over dishes, Faith told me the story of her nephew's murder at age 11. He had accompanied an older uncle to the park to meet friends. Once there, the boy had gone off with an older man whom Faith described as "the kind who like to be with other men" (Claire`s field notes, Nov. 4, 2003). She told me her nephew was found dead a short while later, "beaten up in the face and strangled, with his pants down around his knees" (Claire`s field notes, Nov. 4, 2003).

During one of our research conversations, I related this story to Monique who was shocked to learn that a 9-year-old child would know the details of such an awful tragedy. Laying Faith's story of family alongside her own, she concluded that if there was a "story like that" in her family, she would not have learned of it "till [she] was probably 18."

> The fact that she knows stuff like "who likes to be with other men" she said or "caught with his pants down"...There's no way my mom would have talked about that around me. (Individual conversation, Nov. 4, 2003)

Monique was shocked that at 9 years of age, Faith knew about men "who like to be with other men" and had an understanding of the events that would have preceded the boy being discovered "with his pants down around his knees." She was even more shocked that such a private story (or at least, what should have been a very private story by her standards) would be aired in such a public way, namely over dishes with a relatively unknown volunteer in the youth club kitchen. As I thought about Monique's reaction, I was intrigued that it seemed to have more to do with Faith's exposure to the details of the crime than with the heinous nature of the crime itself. I wondered, then, if her experience of growing up alongside Aboriginal realities and hearing about them in the media had led to her considering such an event typical of Aboriginal life, or if not typical, at least frequent enough to have become part of the assumptions generally made about the troubled lives led by Aboriginal people and their families.

Monique heard another troubling family story from 7-year-old Aboriginal twins named Mercedes and Mark Livingston. They were part of a family of seven children, five of whom attended the youth club regularly. Monique described herself as being "blown away" one day when the twins told her that their mother had "ditched them."

> We were in the kitchen and the kids were standing around on a chair. Mercedes turns around and says "Guess what?" she said in a tone that said something good was about to be announced. She then said "My mom ditched us." Mark repeats the statement. Then I ask how long she's been gone. One answers "Two years," the other says "Two months." They weren't sure. What they were sure of is one day they went somewhere with their mom, she left them and said "When you get home I will take you to such and such a place." When the kids got back, she was gone; the kids said she took the bus somewhere and that she might come back at Christmas. They informed me their mom lies lots and she cheats on men. They said their dad and them might move…so that he could find a girlfriend.
>
> (Monique's field notes, Nov. 4, 2003)

Again, this family story stood in sharp contrast to Monique's experience of family. She had often spoken of the closeness of her parents' relationship and how that foundation carried them through numerous family moves. Having been included, along with her siblings, in the "family meetings" that preceded every move, she had trouble identifying with this story of a mother abandoning her young children. She was also sensitive to the twins' efforts to make sense of their new, motherless reality. As was the case with Faith's story, I wondered which aspect of the story Monique found harder to deal with: the sad nature of the event or the public and candid way the children spoke about their mother in Monique's presence.

A month or so later, Monique gained more perspective into the dynamics within this family when the mother's departure was brought up again by Mercedes in the presence of her older sister, Sandra, who was more guarded about revealing family secrets.

> Mercedes and Sandra are sisters. There are seven kids in the family and a 42-year-old dad. Sandra told me that her mom moved to Ontario and Mercedes said "No, that's not where she is," but Sandra said to zip it. So I don't know what's going on there. (Monique's field notes, Nov. 25, 2003)

Wondering "what's going on there" at the boundary between public and private family stories, Monique's initial shock seemed to have shifted towards curious interest. Another conversation added pieces to the puzzle. Mercedes' twin, Mark, and his younger brother Ricky had been telling her about a fight they witnessed. When she asked how their mother had reacted, she was confused by their answer.

> Mark answered "I don't have a mom." I said "Well what did your dad say?" and Mark said "We don't have a dad" and then Ricky piped up and said "Ya, we do," and so I'm thinking in my head: Well, do they or do they not have a dad? Or, who do they call dad…it's just like what happened with [the other twin] and her sister. Remember that? (Individual conversation, Nov. 18, 2003)

Monique struggled to make sense of what they were saying. Recalling the competing stories about the mother's absence, she now faced competing stories of a father's presence in their life. And as her relationships with the children in this family grew week after week, she found their lived reality more and more unsettling. She recognized that these uncertain stories consolidated her "not so positive view of Native family life" based on her stories she had heard around her hometown.

> because here's obviously a mom/dad that have seven kids, some are with this mom, some are with this dad, some are with both, some are with his new girlfriend, boyfriend and just like this whole mess of kids that in my view, and like I said, this is just my view, aren't that well taken care of, like I don't know about their background that much, all I know is what the kids told me and then it's up to me to believe as much as I want to or don't want to believe. (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004)

She wondered in fact whether moving to the cities to live amongst White people or amongst a diversity of people created more challenges for Aboriginal families. She wondered whether "the kids maybe realize more" and therefore make up cover stories in order to fit themselves into the prevailing reality (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004).

This was how she made sense of another Cooking Club moment involving Willie, the fifth member of the Livingston family we met at River Heights. One evening in early December, five "hockey boys" (this was how the group of boys who played indoor hockey on Wednesday evenings referred to themselves) were gathered in the kitchen about to bake brownies. Willie had shown a great deal of interest in the cooking club and asked to be part of the group that evening. Over the other boys' objections, Monique and I included him among the "hockey boys" and the social dynamics that resulted set the stage for a very interesting conversation.

Soon after we began measuring ingredients and sorting out responsibilities, Willie asked if he could be the first to stir the brownie batter. As I demonstrated to him how to cream the butter, he withdrew his offer saying that stirring that hard would hurt his hands. Upon hearing this, one of the boys who was new to the club spoke up:

-Hey, Willie, what's wrong with your hands anyway?

I noticed the other boys turn expectantly towards Willie and I guessed that although they had all noticed them, Willie's hands had probably never been openly discussed. Willie's hands were unusually small for his age and heavily scarred; the fingers were tapered at the tips and the overall effect was that his hands appeared not to have grown in proportion to the rest of his body. Thrusting his hands deep into his pockets, Willie responded:

- I have skin cancer.
- You have skin cancer?
- No, I had skin cancer when I was small. But it's OK now, I'm not contagious.
- Can we see? (Willie reluctantly pulled his hands out of his pockets.)
- So are those marks from when you had skin grafts? (My question)
- No, ya…I'm not sure

A moment later, another boy offered some information he had heard.

- Did you know that Willie was born with six fingers?

- Really? (I answered, not sure how to respond) That's interesting…but Willie, you have only five fingers now. What happened?
- Oh, I had it cut off, see here? The white part you can see, that's where my sixth finger used to be.

As the conversation unfolded, Willie's discomfort seemed to disappear and he was now holding his hands out for all to see. Another boy asked:

- Is that why you don't play hockey, Willie?
- Ya, it hurts kinda, sometimes.

The boy who had recently joined the youth club spoke up:

- I used to play hockey too but I got kicked off the team.
- What for?
- For hitting…too hard. I broke a guy's arm.
- But why did you get kicked off the team if it was an accident?
- I got into trouble two other times for hitting so I got kicked off.
- I know about getting into trouble for hitting. I get into fights all the time.
- Willie, why do you fight so much? (My question)
- I get mad a lot. Kids bug me.
- Do they bug you about your hands? (My question)
- Ya, but it'll be better after I change schools. (Claire's field notes, Dec. 6, 2003)

I share this conversation in its entirety because it captures what I considered a very special moment. In that brief moment in the kitchen, it was as if the social history and tension that had existed between Willie and the "hockey boys" was momentarily suspended. Standing among them, I saw and felt their genuine interest in learning why Willie's hands looked the way they did. As the conversation moved from his hands to the pain they sometimes caused him to the fighting and to his hopes for changing schools, I began to understand some of the history around Willie's exclusion from the "hockey boys" group and the storied life he lived in the youth club.

Monique and I discussed this cooking club moment during one of our research conversations. She noticed Willie's hands when they did dishes together a few weeks earlier.

> I had never noticed his hands before…But and this is kind of mean on my part but…I assumed, which I probably shouldn't have, that it was an abuse of some sort that their mom had done to them. I really did because in class, we had talked about situations where the moms, usually it's the moms, who would put their babies in scalding hot water cause they just wouldn't stop crying and the babies' bodies would be in blisters because you know, the moms were so strung out or whatever so I know, obviously, that's prejudice on my part but that's where my mind went, straight to that. There must be an abuse of some sort is the very first thing I thought. (Individual conversation, Dec. 6, 2003)

As Monique shared her assumption, I noticed the way she prefaced it with "and this is kind of mean on my part." I interpreted this comment as recognition that it had been premature and wrong on her part to assume abuse had occurred. Whether or not Willie's story of cancer was true, she now had doubts about a conclusion she had drawn based on stories she heard about life in Aboriginal families.

Monique's assumptions about Willie's hands were further challenged when she learned that his younger brother, Ricky, had a similar condition. She learned in fact that Willie and his younger brother were known in the club as brothers, not because of the striking physical resemblance they shared, but because, as one youth club member explained, "they have the same baby hands" (Claire's field notes, Dec. 6, 2003). His words and the disdainful tone with which they were spoken opened my eyes to the way the brothers' hands shaped the social interactions that involved them at the club. One evening, for example, when Willie's younger brother, Mark, was being reprimanded by the club director for being rude to his brother, he protested that Willie was not part of his family and that Willie's only *real* brother was Ricky. Although Monique and I never did find out what caused the boys' hands to be misshapen nor whether in fact all the Livingston siblings were related, Monique was able to put enough pieces of the Livingston's children's lives together to disrupt her prior story of Aboriginal family life.

I find Greene's (1994) idea of contingency helpful in considering the way Monique made sense of Willie's hands. She believes a person's point of view is contingent or depends on his or her lived situation, on the experiences a person has living in a particular location in the world. Monique's view of Aboriginal family life was contingent on her lived experience of "growing up beside" and "hearing about" Aboriginal families. She grew up hearing about problems on the reserves around her hometown, problems which were "assumed to go on but no one talked about them"

(Individual conversation, Dec. 6, 2003). When she saw Willie's hands for the first time, she constructed a story based on what she had heard about Aboriginal home life. Meeting Willie and hearing the Cooking Club conversation served as a catalyst for reflection and made her rethink that story. She began to question, and even regret, her prior assumption once she heard about Willie's surgery, learned that his younger brother had the same condition, and considered the possibility that it might be a congenital problem. Furthermore, as she learned of the single father's efforts, following the mother's departure, to care for seven children, some of whom may or may not have been his own, she seemed to shift her perception of the entire family.

> I've learned to see the kids' point of view. It wasn't just a matter of reading you know so and so died of a stabbing in this part of the city. You know what I mean, like these kids live certain realities that I can never dream of and that's their realities. I'd seen them there [youth club] every week, week to week. It was like, in spite of that, they still have this other side of them and just to see different things through their eyes I think was like…an eye opener. They were born into this world not knowing that and yet they're still alive you know. They're still eating, they're still going to school, and they're still being educated. They talk about their futures, whether it's working at McDonald's, they talk about you know being a hair dresser or whatever…Whether in my eyes those are big dreams, realistic dreams…doesn't matter because that's what they want to do and I'm going to encourage that because that makes them excited. You know and they get happy by that and I think seeing their reality through their eyes, I could get

> past some of my negative opinions on their parents and what must be going on…Because they obviously care about their kids. You know they're still going to school; they're still being dressed. So no they don't know my reality but I can still accept theirs for what it is and still teach them to enter into a social context with them whereas I didn't even have access to that social context before. (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004)

Having access through the youth club to one Aboriginal family's lived reality enabled Monique to get past some of the negative opinions of what must be going on in the homes of Aboriginal families. The experience of getting to know Willie, his siblings and learning of the way their father and grandmother worked together to care for them helped Monique awaken to a different perspective on Aboriginal family life. She came to realize how her views had been conditioned by her experience of growing up "beside" and "hearing" about Aboriginal home life. She could now tell a different story, a story of resilience in the face of hardships such as she had never experienced and probably would never have to face.

Encountering Shifting Identities in the Borderland

I share a final story to further illustrate the shift I feel occurred for Monique. Recalling her sense of responsibility towards persons living with disabilities and tendency to advocate on their behalf, I found it very interesting that towards the end of her time at the youth club, I observed her react to an insensitive remark directed at Willie. One evening, long after the "hands" conversation had taken place in the cooking club, some of the "hockey boys" who had been present gathered for a game of cards at a table in the main room of the club. At an adjacent table, Willie sat playing cards with another boy. As she walked by the tables, Monique overheard one of the "hockey boys" talking about Willie's skin cancer. An outburst of laughter compelled her to intervene.

> I don't even know if Willie heard what they were talking about but the fact that they said it so loud and hadn't realized that Willie was sitting so close to them and they thought it was the funniest thing ever…I watched the whole thing go on…so I just walked up to these guys I was like "What's so funny?"… "Oh nothing." I was like "You guys know that's not something to laugh about. You know Willie obviously can't control that. If you only had one arm would we laugh about that? That's not very funny"…and I just kind of walked away. And I saw them look at each other and roll their eyes because they got caught and spoken to. But I didn't really care at this point. That's so rude. You're not even a foot away from the person and you're laughing at him? But he [Willie] didn't react so I don't know if he did hear or maybe he's just so used to being laughed at that he honestly blocks it out, you know what I'm saying? (Site-specific group conversation, March 10, 2004)

It was as if the cooking club conversation and the moment of insight it brought in the kitchen some weeks earlier had never taken place. Monique was profoundly disappointed. Once the "hockey boys" left the intimacy of the kitchen and were back among the larger group, they reverted back to their patterns of social exclusion. This prompted Monique to act. She was expressing her concern that this incident followed a pattern of ridicule and exclusion all too familiar to Willie. Wondering whether or not he overheard the humour shared at his expense, she concluded that he must have, but had probably learned to cover his emotions by "blocking it out," just as his siblings were learning to protect themselves by blocking out unpleasant family events.

Just as she would have reacted to insensitive remarks made at the expense of a person with a disability, Monique chose to respond to the boys' insensitivity towards Willie. I find this parallel response particularly significant. Approaching the end of her service learning experience, she had become familiar with all five members of the Livingston family. While their picture of family life and social reality did not fit hers, Monique seemed to have gained some understanding of the challenges Willie faced. She felt the boys too should have gained a measure of sensitivity given that they were present the night Willie spoke of his hands in the kitchen. Evidently, they had both heard and not heard what he said. That Monique chose to intervene suggested, I felt, that a shift had taken place in her plotline of growing up "beside" and "hearing about" Aboriginal experience. Although I could not determine whether Monique's response stemmed from an increased sensitivity towards the life Willie lived and the exclusionary behaviour directed at him or towards his physical deformity, I suspected that the former probably contributed to the latter. I concluded that her knowledge of diversity had shifted as a result of this experience. She would now tell a different story of what she knew about diversity.

Stories Retold

Reconsidering Diversity

When Monique entered the research site, she entered as a young woman who had lived a life of connection to family, tradition, and community. That life of connection had frequently been disrupted by family moves with which she learned to cope. Monique also entered the site very open to persons with disabilities as a result of growing up with an aunt with special needs. She also entered with a story of Aboriginal families based on her experience of growing up "beside" and "hearing about" Aboriginal realities. Looking back over the 7 months she spent in the service learning setting, Monique acknowledged that initially, her volunteering experience had "consolidated my not so positive view of Native family life" (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004). But having the opportunity to get to know and interact with individual children and families in their social context provided an opportunity to "see their reality" and "get past some of my negative opinions of their parents" (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004), shaped by her childhood experiences. Monique also learned to rethink her perception of parents in the community. Through her connection with Dave, she came to see Helen as a caring parent, albeit one with a different way of showing affection for her son.

When Monique concluded her service learning, she moved home to spend the summer with her family. Still bitter over the recent family move, she confided to me that her plan was to "keep her head down" and "get through the summer" before returning to finish school and begin her teaching career in another province.

> That's not what happened. But I think part of that whole plan of mine was because I was still very bitter…so it's like fine if I have to move home and work in Pine Valley I'm not going to have fun. I'm not going to try to deal with this you know what I mean? I'm just going to have this tunnel vision; work, and sleep, go to the gym that's it…for four months. (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004)

Over the next four months, as she became more familiar with the social realities of her new hometown, her carefully laid-out plan was dispositioned. "It's like, mmm Monique welcome to the real world you know what I mean?" (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004).

During the spring and summer months, Monique and her mother had many opportunities to talk about their work experiences. Monique found a job on a demonstration farm nearby where school groups came to learn about agricultural practices. Her mother accepted a position teaching a Grade 9 Native Studies program at a community school which was 90% Aboriginal. As Monique carried her service learning experience with her into the many conversations and experiences she shared with her mother over the summer months, her plotline of Aboriginal experience continued to evolve.

Monique had told me earlier of her mother's decision to become a teacher after many years of working as a teacher's aide. She also told me that her mother had obtained a minor in Native Studies as a way to boost her marketability in their home province. As the summer unfolded, Monique heard her mother tell a different story and she discovered the depth of her commitment to the education of Aboriginal children.

> I know my mom's always been open to cultural diversity…always, as long as I can remember. I don't remember her ever making a comment like, "Oh, that Native or that Indian," you know. My mom has never I don't think ever made a comment like that. (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004)

On one occasion, her mother asked Monique to help decorate hoops for use in a hoop dancing activity at her school. She was also invited to attend the event and through it, she learned a great deal about her mother's work.

> And the thing that struck me the most is that there were White kids doing hoop dancing which I had never seen or even heard of because it's always assumed that Native kids do their thing at the Native schools, not at a regular school. I'm sure my eyes were like pretty big because I've never, like there's nothing wrong with that but I've just never seen it before…Like you would almost assume, once again, that someone who is teaching this would be Native…but her minor always was Native studies. (Individual conversation, June 25, 2004)

Noticing the Cree alphabet on the wall, she commented, "Almost everything in my mom's class is to do with Natives or Native culture, Native history" (Individual conversation, June 25, 2004). She was surprised to see non-Aboriginal children performing Aboriginal dancing. Underlying her reaction was a belief that cultural activities such as hoop dancing would be maintained within cultural groups, not practiced across them. It was also surprising to Monique that her mother, who was non-Aboriginal, would be teaching Aboriginal students how to hoop dance.

> That contrasted with everything I had in my head about what it means to be Native. Why would white kids do hoop dancing? And you would almost assume, once again, that someone who is teaching this would be Aboriginal. (Individual conversation, June 25, 2004)

Recalling how Monique struggled previously with her own experience of having a Native Studies' teacher who was "Whiter than me" (Individual conversation, Nov. 18, 2003), this was another unexpected example of cultural crossover. Monique's mother, on the other hand, seemed at ease with her role of teaching Aboriginal culture and history to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children. As she began to attend to her mother's story, Monique learned that her mother, too, carried her own story of Aboriginal experience.

Earlier in the year, Monique had been discussing employment opportunities with a family friend who suggested that given her family's roots in the Red River Valley, there was a strong possibility she could have Métis origins. While Monique had always considered herself a bicultural Canadian with Francophone roots, she was intrigued by the possibility (and resulting economic benefits) of being able to declare Métis heritage on employment forms.

> I'm applying for jobs this week in Pine Valley and it's all Native…so if you're Native…you know when you check off the little box on any application form, instantly you're hired. Doesn't matter what you're doing you'll get a position because they have to hire a certain amount of visible minorities, Indigenous, whatever the case may be. (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 1, 2004)

Monique did not pursue the matter; she knew that to do so would cause consternation within the family. During a group conversation, she described how her grandmother would react if she did.

> My mom's mom would…die if she found out we were Native…because my mom's dad was quite racist when it comes to Natives. Oh my God. He lived in a city where downtown meant Natives…They're drinking out of their little paper bags, you know they're all Native…And he would go pick up grandma and my aunt from church and there'd be a prostitute banging on his car door…All the experiences he's ever encountered with Natives have been negative. So he's racist, he's very racist. (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 1, 2004)

Evidently, the topic was discussed further over the summer because when Monique and I met in the fall, I sensed that her mother had shared more stories that perhaps provided a context for her grandfather's attitude. Monique now spoke as if she understood his views had come about as a result of personal experiences of many negative encounters with Aboriginal people. She also learned from her mother that some years earlier, one of her aunts had been discouraged from exploring the possibility of Aboriginal heritage out of respect for the grandfather's memory; Monique's mother was of a mind that re-opening the issue would bring more harm than good, at least while her grandmother was alive. But as Monique considered the way her grandmother had reinvented her life to some extent since the death of her husband, her actions now seemed to suggest a different family story than the one that had held true during her grandfather's lifetime.

> And so now, [my grandmother's] maybe free to think that's OK and I…haven't heard her make a racial slur or racial comment in a long time. And like I said, she does do things…makes scarves…now that are nice for people who are Native at her church. (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004)

Monique understood that in keeping with spousal responsibilities and societal expectations of the time, her grandmother's duty had been to respect and support her husband's views. Since his death, she had taken on more of a role in the community helping the less fortunate, regardless of their background in a way she might not have done before.

By the fall, Monique seemed to have an understanding that her family story was more complex that it might have appeared on the surface. Conversations with her mother had brought new insights into the way her perspective on Aboriginal life had been shaped, and although she continued at this point to chart a career path away from such concerns, I wondered at the extent to which her service learning experience enabled her to bring this new lens to her plotline of experience with the Aboriginal community.

Reconsidering Herself in Relation to Diversity

While Monique had toyed with the idea of constructing a Métis identity for herself, she was not prepared for the experience of having an Aboriginal identity constructed for her by others in the community. At the end of June, when school groups stopped coming to the demonstration farm, Monique and her colleague set about upgrading and repainting some of the buildings. Monique tried unsuccessfully to purchase paint thinner for the project. Everywhere she went, she was informed that all solvents had been pulled from the shelves and her requests for assistance from store clerks were met with suspicious stares.

> Ammonia pulled off the shelves citywide. Like that's huge. Obviously the problem is that severe. I don't know…it was an eye opener like I said. I just wasn't used to being in that position and having people look at me like I was a drug addict you know. (Individual conversation, June 25, 2004)

This paint thinner story had a profoundly dispositioning effect on Monique. On one level, while she was aware of the connection between paint thinner and substance abuse problems, the fact that every store she visited had pulled solvents from their shelves was a shocking revelation of the depth of the substance abuse problems in her community. Until then, substance abuse had not really been a part of her world but the fact that she could no longer readily buy supplies for a painting project meant it now impacted her directly. On another level, Monique was troubled that anyone would suspect her of having an ulterior motive for buying paint thinner. In that moment, she experienced firsthand what it was like to be judged and misunderstood, the victim of other people's arrogant perceptions. The experience brought her face-to-face with Aboriginal realities in her home community, and forced her to "see things you're not faced with in the big city" (Individual conversation, June 25, 2004).

> I expected maybe just to go there, work and maybe stay not naïve but kind of shutter away from the social stuff that I didn't want to deal with. You know what I mean because I've seen it at volunteering…you know just kind of go there, live

> there, but not really live. Like close your eyes to everything you don't want to see. But to throw it in your face so much, and it's going on literally all around you. How can you just be like "Oh, I don't see it." (Individual conversation, June 25, 2004)

She now recognized the misguided nature of her summer plan. In her final research interview, Monique recognized that while the behaviour of parents and family dynamics she observed in the service learning setting differed markedly from her own experience, she had encountered children there who, like her, carried plotlines of family connection and disruption.

Monique's familiar pattern of responding on behalf of persons with disabilities had also shifted. While she had always been aware of, and quick to respond to, issues of disability based on her own experience of it in a family setting, the fact that she had responded to protect Willie suggested that her sense of responsibility had shifted to include children whose lives did not afford the same privileges and opportunities for cultural or socio-economic reasons.

Reconsidering Herself in Relation to Teaching for Diversity

Over the course of the summer, Monique's process of reflection continued. I noticed a shift in her attitude towards the prospect of teaching in her home province. No longer was she telling a story of living "beside" and "hearing about" Aboriginal people. Having interacted with Aboriginal children and, through them, encountered examples of parenting and family styles different from what she had known, she had developed an appreciation of the complexity of Aboriginal realities. She seemed to be recognizing and accepting a measure of responsibility for the challenges faced by Aboriginal children and others from disenfranchised communities. I saw this shift reflected in a career path change that she shared with me during a conversation in October.

> I don't think I'm as naïve as I once was about it…I do know that back home, this is a huge concern, there are a lot of challenges facing [Natives] but at the same time, I don't think I'm as negative as I once was towards the whole thing…Based on my experience they've never been in my class but if there are Native kids, let's say I'm teaching in a dual track high school, am I going to be more close-minded towards them? I doubt it. Was I once going to be? Probably. But…it's a reality you know. And I do want to teach in my home province. (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004)

Monique had spoken of her desire to avoid teaching in her home province because of the Aboriginal issues she would have to face there. Now, having experienced these issues up close and having recognized their complexity, she seemed to be accepting to share the responsibility of addressing them in the context of a teaching career in her home province. She recognized that her involvement in the youth club had shifted the negative perceptions she brought with her.

> I think we're in like parallel like train tracks. I still think there's some interaction there. I think I'm cool with it. I think for a very long time I wouldn't have been cool with it and I wasn't cool with it, because I didn't have to deal with it. But

> I've learned to see the kids' point of view. (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004)

The Journey

The nature of the shift that occurred in Monique's understanding of diversity is worthy of attention. Looking back over field notes, artefacts and conversations that took place between October 2003 and October 2004, I concluded that the shift was neither sudden nor certain. Rather, it occurred very gradually and followed an uncertain path. I was intrigued, in fact, by a reversal I sensed in Monique's thinking when we met partway through the summer. At the end of April, Monique left the research site questioning her prior assumptions about parents and families in disenfranchised communities. Having interacted with Aboriginal children in an out of school setting such as the youth club, she gained an appreciation of their family and social contexts. Yet, after a few weeks of teaching school children (a high proportion of whom were Aboriginal) at the demonstration farm school in Pine Valley, her comments seemed to revert back to the view she expressed before entering the research site.

> They just don't care about school…like how do you get through to them because they don't care. You know you can't threaten them with this, this, this, or this because they're past caring. They haven't cared for a long time. You know that you don't have the family support. It's not like you can phone the parents. (Individual conversation, June 25, 2004)

Although the farm visit took children outside of the school setting, they were still bound by the institution of school in that they were accompanied by teachers and expected to partake in certain activities. Monique commented on the challenge they often posed in terms of discipline.

> So as much as I didn't want to see it I saw it every single day at work for 2 months. All these Native kids…I got to see the educational side of it. So whether I wanted to or not I was dealing with it so I thought I'd deal with it positively and take an active role as a future teacher. I can learn from them and they can learn from me…because the setting, like the situation was…they're there for 2 hours and you're always with a big group and it's not like I could do my job either, take a few to the side and talk to them right? (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004)

Monique's words reflect the frustration she felt as she struggled to motivate and guide the visiting children through the curriculum. I detected a tone of resignation and a sense of detachment I had not heard or felt when she had left the research site. It seemed that in two short months, Monique was no longer feeling very connected to or responsible for Aboriginal children; she had fallen back into telling and living a familiar story of existing "beside" and "knowing about" Aboriginal realities.

It was as if, almost in an unconscious way, this familiar thinking pattern had been called up to guide her actions when she moved from the youth club context to the farm school context. Johnson (1987) helps me think about the way one's knowledge is shaped in context and always remains contextually dependent. The farm school setting called up what he calls an embodied knowing of Aboriginal children, that is to say tacit understandings shaped during her childhood in a particular time, place, and set of relationships. In the short-term institutional framework of the demonstration farm, there was little chance of establishing the kind of relationship that shifted her knowing of children of Aboriginal heritage in the youth club setting. This setting seemed to call forward Monique's memories of old experiences and reorder them so as to give them priority over more recent ones. This embodied knowledge exerted a far more powerful pull than the knowledge she had recently shaped in the youth club setting and she fell back into living a comfortable familiar story. In her story "I Stand Here Ironing," Olsen (1980) calls attention to the creases imposed by the powerful iron of one's history. It was as if the shift Monique made in her thinking during her service learning experience was no longer evident. When she was confronted with a familiar image of Aboriginal children not fitting into a school environment, her thinking seemed to revert back into the familiar pattern she had known all her life growing up "beside" and "hearing about" stories of deficiency among Aboriginals in her community.

When she spoke of her career plans at this point (June 2004), Monique told me that teaching Aboriginal children remained outside of her comfort zone and she confirmed she had no intention of pursuing a teaching career in her home province. She was considering requesting a special needs placement for her field experience in the fall. I had a sense at that moment that her experience at the farm school was having the opposite effect the youth club had had. Her words were now echoing what she had said when she first entered the service learning site.

Monique's experience at the farm school reminded me of the experience of my former student, Chris, in the band-controlled school. My thoughts turned to the negative impact of unmediated encounters across cultural borders. Evidently, moving in and out of the institutional narrative of school was a factor in the way Monique was able to interact and learn about children in these communities. When school groups stopped coming and Monique's experiences in the community continued over the next 2 months, her perceptions seemed to resume the course they had taken in the youth club. When we met for the final interview at the end of October, I detected still more of a shift in her story. She was now expressing a desire to teach in her home province, recognizing that even if she became a French Immersion teacher, she would likely be teaching and/or at least interacting in her school with Aboriginal children.

> I think I have been not desensitized but I think I have acknowledged that's reality and if I do want to stay in my home province and teach or stay here, it's going to be a reality anywhere like pretty much from now on. More so there obviously than here. But I think that's a risk that I'm willing to take if I do go back home and teach. I think that Pine Valley really secured my belief that I think living in Pine Valley for 4 months was an eye opener. (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004)

The context of engagement certainly had an impact on shaping Monique's thinking about diversity. But so too did the opportunity to engage in reflection over time. It seemed that Monique's process of constructing new knowledge about diversity had required that she engage, reflect, engage again and reflect again, in a sort of forwards and backwards movement, building to an overall cumulative effect over time. As Monique mentioned, had it not been for her experiences in the youth club, the outcome of her summer in Pine Valley might have been very different.

> So I really think [the youth club] was a good stepping-stone for Pine Valley for the summer. You know what I mean? Like had I not had that and just gone to Pine Valley, I would have gone nuts. I would have been like, what's going on all around me? My world is falling apart. (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004)

Reflections such as this one took place in the context of individual conversations with me and to some extent during group conversations with the other research participants. I concluded that having the opportunity to reflect in relationship was perhaps as significant a factor in Monique's shifting stories as the context of her involvement and the extent of time over which it took place. It seemed to be in the overlap of moments witnessed and stories shared that we were able to explore assumptions. I wondered whether Monique's perception of Willie and his family would have shifted in the same way had she and I not had the opportunity to share our experiences in the youth club.

As Monique carried her youth club experience with her to Pine Valley, she had the opportunity to talk with her mother about her experiences. Her mother, too, shared stories of experience teaching in a school which was 90% Aboriginal: "I got a really good idea of what was going on at my mom's school and stuff through her" (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004). Despite the fact that she initially reverted back to a familiar pattern and resisted her mother's efforts to help her see another side of working with children in disenfranchised communities, her stories continued to shift and reached a point where she was constructing a future teaching in her home province, recognizing the possibility of interaction with Aboriginal children and accepting a measure of responsibility for their well-being. I wonder whether Monique would have been as willing to share her stories and wonders in the absence of the trusting relationship she enjoyed with her mother and the one she and I were able to build over the year together.

Hollingsworth (1994) speaks of relational knowing as a form of knowledge available to teachers through their critical understanding of self and others in relationship. I felt Monique constructed some of this knowledge. While she recognized the changes that took place within her, she also recognized the boundaries of her comfort zone and the way she and her mother differed in their level of commitment to issues of cultural diversity, particularly to Aboriginal educational issues. Monique witnessed her mother struggle at times with her teaching duties and despite the shifts that occurred in her knowledge and understanding, she still could not see herself following in her mother's footsteps.

> Like let's just take this scenario: I move to Pine Valley and teach for example my mom's class that she taught last year. I don't think I'd be able to with all the information I'm given, not want to take those kids out of the homes that they were living in. Do you know what I mean? Like I would really be hurt by the fact that they were hurting. I would personalize it too much. I will want to take the role of let me help you but it's going to come back in the end to screw me over because I can't have all my kids living at my house with me you know…that's what I'm saying…I don't want to care too much because you know the more you do, the

> more it's going to hurt you in the end…I can't fathom people who hurt kids. (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004)

Rejecting the saviour mentality as both harmful to her and unlikely to solve the wider societal problem, she seemed resigned to the fact that her actions alone could not begin to address issues on a collective scale. As she spoke of wanting to "take those kids out of the homes," I sensed the lingering presence of an undercurrent of deficiency and of responsibility being attributed to Aboriginal families. I found myself wondering whether with time, experiences, and reflection both in and out of school, these undercurrents might eventually make way for an understanding and appreciation of the impact of societal structures on the inequities she witnessed among Aboriginal people she met and would meet in the future.

CHAPTER 5: THEA'S STORIES TO LIVE BY

Stories Told

A memory box (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994) is a collection of items such as photographs, gifts, family heirlooms, and other special objects chosen to represent significant moments, people, or events in one's life journey. My supervisor, Jean, introduced me to the way memory boxes can serve as triggers to our memories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994) in the narrative process. Towards the end of our time in the research sites, I shared the idea of the memory box with my participants and suggested that if they had time over the summer, they might give some thought to what their memory box might include. When I sat with Thea the following October, she opened the conversation by telling me how much she enjoyed thinking about and collecting items for her memory box. I, too, came that day with something to share with Thea. Over the summer, I pulled out what I considered to be the main plotlines of her life story as I had heard her tell it over the past 10 months. As our conversation unfolded that day, I was struck by the correlation between the plotlines I had mapped out and the memory box items she described.

Prior Experience Travelling Abroad

The first of these items was a Dr. Seuss book entitled *Oh the Places You'll Go* (1990), a book she received as a Grade 12 graduation present from her parents. She explained that her father's work as a petroleum engineer had taken him and later his family to many countries around the world. Thea, in fact, was born in Australia and spent the first years of her life there, returning to Canada at 3 years of age. When she was 7, she and her family moved to the Middle East where they lived for the next 2½ years. By the time she was 10 years old, Thea had lived half her life away from home. One of the advantages of living overseas, she explained, was the opportunity to travel extensively.

> Living in the Middle East was an experience: I learned a lot. And you know I still remember all of it, almost all of it. Sure, little things you don't remember but we went on all kinds of holidays, trips because we were so close. Like Disney World, Euro Disney, Paris, we went to Africa, we went on a safari in Kenya and we went to Thailand, we went to Spain, we went to Switzerland and we went to Australia every Christmas and on our way over there we stopped through Thailand and Malaysia, so we did a lot of travelling. (Individual conversation, March, 2004)

I was amazed at the number of destinations she mentioned and I wondered how much time she spent in each of them. I wondered, too, what might have caught her attention and, as a child, what impression she would have taken away of each of these far-away places.

Homesickness did not come up during our conversation. Thea seemed to have thrived during these years of living and travelling abroad. When I inquired why that was, she told me she was a person who loved change; in fact, she had always been more comfortable in environments where change was possible. She spoke of how this played out for her at the international school that she attended along with other foreign national children. All students in the school followed a self-directed study program of modules and certificates of advancement and Thea described this format as a very good fit for her.

> This school was very interesting because you were kind of just grouped into a classroom and you worked at your own pace. You would work away at all your classes and then after you did five modules in science you'd get a certificate. After the five modules for math you'd get a certificate. For me that worked well because as soon as I got sick of one thing, I switched to another subject…It was like self-directed school and we all just kind of knew how the program worked. You went and got your work and you did it…. I wasn't made to listen to a teacher so that was fine with me. (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004)

A regular pattern of returning home, first to Australia and then to Canada, served as a counterpoint to living and traveling abroad. Thea referred to these trips as "coming home, and she enjoyed the opportunity they provided to reconnect with family and familiar health services. I wondered what it was that made these particular trips feel different from the others, what made them feel like home to her. Had her family left behind a home to come back to or did they stay with family and/or friends? Whatever the reason was, these trips home seemed to have a grounding effect in keeping her connected to family during her life overseas.

Thea also attributed a good measure of her enjoyment of living in the Middle East to the experience of living in a compound. It was located just outside the city and she recalled how her family and other ex-patriate families occupied 12 identical houses that shared a common space and a strong sense of community.

> We would go into each other's houses, we would just walk in, we knew everyone's parents by their first name…and the parents, especially the moms,

> were really active in the community, none of the moms worked. Everyone played with everyone…you were friends with everyone; you didn't have a choice not to be…it was a sense of a small community…like a small town. (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004)

She referred to this time as "living within the walls" (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004). I had a sense that within this familiar and secluded environment, she felt sheltered and protected from an unfamiliar world beyond the walls, almost as if she lived for a time in a sort of home away from home.

Thea remembered having little contact with local people. There were no children of Arab heritage in her school and although the curriculum included lessons in Arabic, there were few opportunities to use it. "We had to take Arabic, but I can count to 10 and that's about as far as I can go with my Arabic just because I never used it. We just learnt it because it was cultural" (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004). What limited exposure Thea had to local people occurred during occasional trips to the market she made with her mother and sister. She remembered people coming forward to look closely at her sister's "white-blond hair" (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004) and vendors offering her mother free fruit in exchange for the opportunity to touch it. Thea also recalled the period of Ramadan because during this time her mother covered her head for market visits. She remembered being told by her mother how important it was to "show respect for other customs even if you don't believe what they believe" (Individual conversation, Oct. 27, 2004).

I wondered how Thea felt as a young girl of 7 witnessing the intense curiosity around her sister's hair in the midst of so many unusual sights and sounds. As I picture her mother explaining her observance of Ramadan customs to Thea and her sister in the market, I am reminded of Bateson's (1994) description of a tea ceremony she attended in a Persian garden. Accustomed to entering strange cultures, Bateson found herself unexpectedly witnessing a ritual animal sacrifice in the presence of her 2-year-old daughter. Feeling caught between her interest, as an anthropologist, in all that is strange, and her need, as a mother, to bring familiarity to this unusual event, Bateson improvised by whispering soothing comments in her daughter's ear while drawing attention to the anatomical parallels between the growing pile of discarded sheep organs and the human body. She writes of standing in the garden and experiencing a moment of dissonance, confusion, and vulnerability in the face of this unexpected intrusion of the outside world.

> I was in that garden as a learner, an outsider and yet, because I was there as a parent, I was simultaneously a teacher, an authority. Trying to understand and remember what I saw, I was also trying to establish an interpretation that would be appropriate for Vanni, one that would increase her understanding of the living world and her place in it and also bring her closer to the Iranians she would be living among for several years. (Bateson, 1994, p. 5)

I wondered how Thea and her sister had felt to be under such scrutiny in the market and how her mother had made sense of this event for them. Did Thea understand that local people were drawn to her sister's hair because they considered it strange? Did she have a sense that amidst what must have been so many unfamiliar sights and sounds, it was they who were considered strange, even exotic? I wondered if her mother experienced the vulnerability Bateson (1994) described as she attempted to fit herself and her family into a different culture.

I wondered to what extent these experiences shaped Thea's awareness of the outside world and her place within it. Had she experienced feeling *other* in a foreign land or had *living within the walls* of the compound kept her rooted in a White perspective, peripherally aware of the presence of *otherness* beyond.

> I know that to be in such a garden was to stand in the middle of a vision of the world…Gardens are bounded, walled; within, all is fertile and hospitable, but there is always an awareness of a world outside that is less benign, an unruly and formless realm of desert harshness and marauding strangers. (Bateson, 1994, p. 2)

Thea also had experiences within the compound walls that contributed to her growing awareness of difference. She learned about the value of languages through her mother's experience of compound life. Although their community was made up largely of Canadian and American ex-patriate families, there were several European families as well. Thea recalled how her mother complained of feeling linguistically incompetent living alongside European women who knew five or six languages and, when the family returned to Canada, she made sure both daughters continued in French Immersion.

> My mom wouldn't have put us in the program when we came back but when we lived in the Middle East, she realized how incompetent she was without a second language and she said "Take my word for it now because I don't have a second language…You don't realize how much further back you are if you don't have a

> second language…I was so far behind. You know I have a degree and everything." That's why we stayed in the program. (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004)

Another lesson learned from the experience of living abroad was the value of roots. Although the compound provided the family with a sense of home away from home, Thea recalled her mother eventually putting a stop to further overseas postings. She felt it was time to provide her daughters with an opportunity to get to know their grandparents and wanted no further disruption in their academic lives.

> My mom said, "We're not moving"…My dad travelled so much he didn't quite see how important it is for kids to have a foundation like my mom saw. My mom [said] "I'm not ready to send [Thea] to boarding school. She's just kind of got her feet back since we're back now, we can't." (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004)

While the travel opportunities continued over the years, the experience of living overseas ended at that point. Nevertheless, the many destinations Thea either lived in or visited over the years remained a very important part of her stories.

Curiosity About Life 'Beyond the Walls'

Living within the walls also seemed to fit Thea's experience of growing up in a White, upper middle-class Canadian family. She lived a privileged life with unlimited access to arts, sports, and leisure activities. In Canada, as in the Middle East, Thea was raised in a protected environment, buffered from the realities of the less fortunate. Yet, as

I came to know the story Thea told of herself, I noticed that she was curious about what lay beyond the walls of privilege. In fact, that is what drew her to this research project; Thea saw the service learning project as an opportunity to interact and gain experience working with underprivileged children.

This would not be the first time Thea sought opportunities to explore life *beyond the walls*. As a teenager, she taught dance for a few months in a lower income community. This was an experience she found challenging; she described her pupils as "very needy kids who did things to get attention" (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004). Thea also told me that, on occasion, she volunteered alongside her mother in a women's emergency shelter where she encountered women from diverse cultures whose lives were very different from her own.

> They'd come to the shelter with their six or seven kids, I mean a big family, you know immigrants, a lot of Aboriginals who have come away from their group. They were only there for a maximum of 3 weeks. It was the longest they could stay and they could either go to the long-term shelter or into subsidized housing. (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004)

Moving to a high school of 2,000 students also brought exposure to a larger cross-section of ethno-cultural and socio-economic groups. Thea recalled, for example, being part of a Teacher Advisor group (TA) made up of students from Grades 10, 11, and 12, many of whom were at risk of dropping out. As an honour roll student, she had little in common with these students. The contrast between her life and theirs became evident as nine of her classmates were expelled during the first month of school.

> I thought it was kind of interesting because I came from a small junior high school where it was all French Immersion…We were close…I knew all the teachers. All the teachers knew you. In high school, we had a lot of challenged kids…I was like WOW, people have problems. You've heard about them but you didn't really see them ever. You know drugs were never a factor in junior high…We had a couple of kids that smoked and we thought that was like the worse thing in the world and this is junior high. Like it was a pretty sheltered junior high and I get to high school and I'm with 2,000 kids. (Individual Conversation, March 1, 2004)

This was a very different environment from what she had known in school up to that point. Hearing her words "WOW, people have problems" confirmed the extent to which Thea grew up buffered, both at home and abroad, from the realities of those less fortunate than she.

During her high school years, Thea became involved in a work-study program for students with various developmental disabilities. She noticed students from the program as she made her way each morning past their classrooms to her TA class. She described their behaviour in the hallway as unorthodox. "They'd go 'Hi' and watch you walk by because they're very easily distracted" (Individual conversation, Oct. 27, 2004). She shared one particularly memorable encounter.

> I remember one time *O Canada* was playing and I was running to get to class on time. One of the kids goes, "STOP!" and he starts yelling at me. He's like, "It's the *O Canada,* you have to stop and sing!" So he starts singing, right? And here I

> am in the hallway and I can't move because this kid's just yelled at me and I just wanted to say, "But I'm trying to get to…." and here he is singing at the top of his lungs in the hallway with some of his work-study friends. When it was over, he said, "Now you can run, run fast" (laughter). (Individual conversation, Oct. 2004)

Another student might have reacted angrily or at the very least ignored such an intrusion. Thea did neither and I found her reaction interesting. She initially tried to reason with the boy, but then stopped mid-sentence as she noticed him singing "at the top of his lungs." At the conclusion of the anthem, she found humour in his invitation to resume her sprint to class. Whatever the reason for her reaction to his unexpected interruption and admonishment, it seemed that she found the student's unusual behaviour interesting and worthy of attention. She was courteous and deferred to his wishes as she passed through his world, much as her mother had taught her to do in the Middle East.

Thea spoke of another work-study student, Sarah, whom she met in high school. She remembered her as having a "mental disability of some sort" (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004) and was intrigued with her from the moment she showed up one day for volleyball practice. Sarah had hopes of making the team and Thea learned that her parents requested that the coach allow her to try out. But with the team members having already been selected (mostly holdovers from the previous year), the coach carved out a spot for Sarah as team assistant. Thea recalled Sarah's enthusiasm and unorthodox behaviour during practices and games. "She would grab the balls hit by the players like she thought it was the greatest thing ever" and "bring her pompoms to the game and sit on the bench wearing her jersey" (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004). Her cheery nature endeared her to the team members and they became accustomed to her presence.

Sarah soon began seeking out Thea and her friends outside of volleyball practices and games. Thea recalled how Sarah would climb up to join her on the bleachers during intramurals as she socialized with her friends. She noticed Sarah's invasion of their social space initially made some of her friends uncomfortable: "they didn't know what to do with someone who had a disability." But just as she had done with the volleyball team, Sarah eventually won over Thea's friends with her persistence, cheery nature, and friendly, albeit obtrusive, manner.:

> by the end of the year she was writing Christmas cards to all the boys, they went out and got these Christmas cards and candy canes…and they gave them to her in the afternoon. And she thought it was the greatest thing ever and she had a crush on one of them and she'd tell us about it…then we started going out of our way for her because it did mean a lot to her…teachers would tell us she wrote stories about us. (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004)

It was interesting to hear Thea describe the way her friends' reaction to Sarah changed over time. At first, they barely tolerated Sarah on the margins of their group. As time went on, however, they began reciprocating Sarah's attention, and eventually, started going "out of [their] way for her." They seemed to grow more considerate of her feelings as well. When Sarah confided to Thea that she had a crush on one of the boys in her social group and planned to ask him to graduation, Thea stepped in to help address this unexpected turn of events. She took Sarah aside and gently explained that her friend had already committed to attending graduation with another girl. Thea's gesture reminded me of her mother's words in the market or Bateson's experience in a Persian garden of trying to make sense of an unexpected event by seeking the familiar in the strange. Just as her mother had done for her abroad, Thea now seemed to be taking on a role of interpreter/mediator, helping her friends make sense of Sarah's unusual presence, and Sarah make sense of theirs.

Thea was aware of Sarah's difference and was drawn to it. As she described her relationship with her, she seemed to have an understanding that Sarah was not as fortunate as she was. Sarah craved attention and Thea had it to give—and she noticed the positive effect her attention had on Sarah. This seemed to be what encouraged her to continue her involvement with her, to continue reaching beyond the walls to provide the attention that Sarah craved and she could so easily provide.

Teaching as a Lifelong Dream

The next item Thea shared with me from her memory box was a pair of dance slippers. She explained that dance was "very much a part of me" (Individual conversation, Oct. 27, 2004) and told me that, to this day, every time she returns home, she makes a point of visiting the dance studio. Thea had been involved in dance since the age of 3 and it was in the dance studio that her dream of becoming a teacher took root.

> I've been dancing at the same studio since I started there when I was 3…and that's where I started student teaching when I was in Grade 8. Because I always looked up to one dance teacher I remember and she was a Grade 1 teacher as well

> as my jazz teacher. And I have written in my book I want to be just like Miss Anita when I get older…it's just something that's been my motivation in everything I do. (Individual conversation, Oct. 27, 2004)

Like Miss Anita, Thea imagined herself teaching in both the dance studio and the classroom. Aside from Miss Anita, there were other teaching models within Thea's extended family. She had several aunts and uncles who were either teachers or administrators. During family get-togethers, Thea would often baby-sit her cousins. She "loved being with kids" (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004) and later began teaching dance to young children at the studio and working as a camp counsellor in the summer. These early experiences with children played an important part in her story of wanting to become a teacher.

Thea was also motivated to become a teacher because she loved school. For her, it had always been a positive place to be. She was a bright, hard-working, above-average student who loved learning and was successful at it.

> I love school…I always liked school…when I was little I always loved to go to school…I always wanted to be a teacher and I think because I had a positive experience in school is why I wanted to be a teacher. (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004)

As a child, Thea remembered being very eager to begin school. Although her formal experience of school did not start until she returned to Canada from Australia, her brightness and energy level caught the attention of her playschool teachers. Thea described herself as "always above average but at the same time I was always above average in how much energy I had" (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004). Her teachers recommended that she be tested for hyperactivity and suggested to her parents that she would need to be challenged in school.

> They told my mom "your daughter needs to be challenged because she's smart but she's very active and if you don't give her something, she's going to be bored and she will cause problems…We have the private school option (and there was no private school close to where we lived in Australia), or French Immersion." (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004)

It was, therefore, her energy level that initially motivated her parents to enroll Thea in French Immersion and keep her busy and challenged. It was not until her mother's experience in the Middle East that the value of a second language entered into play.

With the exception of the time she spent in the Middle East, Thea remained in the French Immersion program from Kindergarten to Grade 12. She, therefore, spent most of her school years with the same classmates, many of whom became close friends. Their families were close as well. Given this consistent and comfortable environment as well as her facility and enthusiasm for learning, I could understand why Thea found school a positive place to be.

Thea's image of herself as a teacher continued to take shape in university when she chose to pursue a career as a French language teacher. In a course paper, she wrote of being drawn to the opportunity of combining her love of teaching with her love of French language and culture.

> As a future teacher, I'll have the chance to teach French and about French culture and that excites me because it's a very interesting topic that I find fascinating. I discovered Francophones not by choice but now I'm happy that happened. (Excerpt from course paper, Feb. 2004, Participant-approved translation by researcher)

Her first year of university study was difficult. Finding herself in very large classes with little contact with her instructors, she floundered and for the first time ever in her educational journey, considered quitting school. Although it was not the first time she experienced challenge at school, this was the first time her commitment to becoming a teacher ever wavered.

Thea had faced challenges in school before, but, as she described these difficult times to me, I understood that a teacher had made the difference each time she struggled. She recalled for example how her Grade 5 teacher had helped her transition back into the French Immersion program when she returned from the Middle East. At first, she resisted being in this teacher's class because it was to be combined. Accustomed to being at the top of her class, Thea feared she would be under-challenged as a Grade 5 student in a combined 4/5 class. In retrospect, this placement was ideal as the combined class context provided many opportunities for her to work independently and progress at her own pace while the teacher was busy teaching the other grade. It was a similar approach to what she had experienced at the international school in the Middle East; Thea not only caught up but thrived.

Thea also remembered struggling when she "hit high school and social studies came along" (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004). I found it surprising that one so well-travelled would dislike social studies. I would have thought her exposure to so many other cultures around the world would have put her at an advantage, but Thea found that social studies had "no link to life" (Excerpt from course paper, Feb. 2004, Participant-approved translation by researcher). This made me wonder to what extent her experiences abroad while living within the walls or travelling to so many holiday destinations as a tourist had connected in any real way to her life. Again, Thea shared how a special teacher's effort helped her overcome her academic difficulties. Her social studies teacher at the time happened also to be her volleyball coach. As a star player, Thea distinguished herself by her work ethic and determination to succeed. She remembered how her teacher/coach reacted when she experienced difficulties in his class:

> when we went to the first parent-teacher interviews and the teacher said to my mom, "You know what?…I can see that [Thea] is putting in the effort and this just doesn't come as easy for her." He said to me: "How about you come see me over lunch or before school or whenever…we'll talk a little bit like a couple of times a week." So I started going and it was funny because I would have studied for the test…and he'd circle in my book for me so I really knew what I had to be studying and then I ended up doing better because we'd have quizzes every week or so, instead of getting five or six out of ten, I started getting eight, nine, ten out of ten which was more like I was used to. (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004)

The following year, Thea had a different teacher with whom she did not relate in the same way. As she described this teacher's approach, she understood the lack of connection between his teaching style and her ability to learn.

> He was just a very different kind of person and I wouldn't have even felt comfortable talking to him…so I just kind of ploughed through it…he was just the kind of teacher who would lecture…the whole class and you didn't do a lot of interactive stuff or anything and that's the way I learn. So that's why I didn't do as well. (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004)

One other teacher stood out for Thea in high school. During her Grade 12 year, she developed a close relationship with her TA advisor who was also the shop teacher. She noticed the way he reached out to her classmates, many of whom faced considerable challenges. She described him as someone who was always "giving kids breaks with absences, reaching out because they promised to try" (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004). She saw the way he bent the rules in their favour in an effort to build the kind of relationships that kept them connected to school when they might otherwise have dropped out.

As she told me about these special teachers, I sensed she saw a connection between her ability to learn and the quality of attention she received from her teachers. Although Thea experienced a great deal of success in school, she recognized that it was her moments of struggle that helped her become aware of the learning environment which best fit her needs. This knowledge proved to be useful when, following a difficult first year of university study, she chose to begin her second year in a different setting, one that provided smaller classes and more opportunity to build relationships with her instructors.

> I think with people who are approachable I work a lot better. You know if they're not approachable, I have a really hard time talking to them. I won't ask for help. You know it's like when I have a teacher I can relate to, I want to impress them so I work harder. I don't just put out to their minimum. (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004)

As she became more aware of herself and her needs as a learner, Thea also seemed to be refining her image of herself as a teacher.

> When I was younger in elementary I wanted to be a teacher…I wanted to teach the little kids. Then as I got into junior high and high school, I thought, "Oh, I could teach gym because I loved gym and I could coach the sports teams"…I know once I started teaching dance that's when it really hit me that I like five-, six-, seven-year-olds, that's what I wanted to be teaching. (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004)

At this point in her life, Thea was telling a story of herself positioned in school as an early childhood teacher and she was committed to making her career choice a reality. The image that had taken root in the dance studio remained a strong theme in the stories she told.

Growing Up in Relation to a Sibling

A photograph completed the list of items Thea included in her memory box. It was a photograph taken of her at age 5 with her arms wrapped protectively around her scowling 2-year-old sister. She chose this photograph because she felt the pose represented their relationship. While she and her sister were close as playmates, Thea saw herself as very different. I understood then that growing up with a younger sister so very different from herself was a very important part of Thea's story; she seemed to define herself in relation to her sister.

> That was me with my sister when we were little. And this is how it always was with her. I was always happy and Hilary was always whiny and grumpy. And I always had to have control over her. Like I would drag her around, I'd put my arm around her because I couldn't lift her up and I'd drag her…my mom says this picture is exactly how I was all the time. I was always just happy to be alive and I was always excited about everything. (Individual conversation, Oct. 27, 2004)

Looking back at the photograph, I found it interesting that Thea described herself as needing to "have control over" her sister. She described herself as a "good girl" who was always very accepting of rules. She described her sister, on the other hand, as someone who would "go out of her way to break [rules]" (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004).

> I never had problems like curfew or respecting rules around the house. I never had that kind of problem. My problems were always school-related, no behaviours, just keeping up in social studies. We are so different because my sister doesn't have problems that are school-related except for being a little lazy but she has

> problems coming home on time and picking up after herself. (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004)

While Thea lived a story of compliance, her sister lived a story of transgression. It was easy to understand why, as a child, she imagined a dual career for herself: a "cop by day, and [a] dance teacher at night" (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004). The sisters' difference was also reflected in their play patterns: Thea preferred dolls while her "tomboy" (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004) sister leaned toward sports. She recalled how differently they cared for their toys and how difficult it had been for them to share a room in their house in the Middle East.

> I was very picky about everything. All my dolls had to be right where I left them; everything had to be perfect. My sister didn't care. She would come in there and she would throw everything around and I could not handle having to live with her. So I remember I took tape and put a tape line down the middle of my room. (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004)

Thea's experience of school also stood in sharp contrast to her sister's. While both sisters distinguished themselves at school academically and athletically, Thea felt they followed different paths to reach these achievements, particularly with respect to academics. The self-paced learning program she loved while attending the International School had not worked well for her sister. She described herself as needing "to spend lots of time in school to do well" (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004), while her sister achieved high marks with little effort. Despite "getting along really well," she recognized that their relationship had an underlying current of "competition for sure" (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004).

> I was never the kind of person to do just the minimum. I would always give 150%…that's how my sister and I are so different…she does better than me if you compare our marks in high school…I would probably have done I'd say 5% weaker…but I put in 200 times more effort than she does. So that's how we're very different….she only does what she has to do to get by…so that's kind of how it works in our family. (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004)

I found it interesting that while she described herself as "never the kind of person to do just the minimum," she did not seem resentful of her sister for achieving similar results with little effort. She seemed resigned to the fact that this was "how it works" in their family. There were times when her sister worked hard. She pointed out her sister's involvement, for example, in a more competitive soccer program and the positive impact this was having on her work ethic. "She's an excellent soccer player…her age group is a lot more competitive…before that she was really lazy and the soccer kind of gave her a kick to get going" (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004).

A contrasting work ethic is a strong theme throughout Thea's stories of growing up with her sister, and one that also seemed to be shaping the vision she had of herself in relation to their future careers. Pointing out how she "babysat a lot and loved kids" (Individual conversations, March 1, 2004), Thea always knew that she wanted to become a teacher. She described her sister's career goals, on the other hand, as "pretty broad." She was quite certain that her sister would not follow her career path, indeed should not.

"She could never be a teacher ever…she has no patience with kids whatsoever" (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004). Unlike her, Thea's sister had done very little babysitting and she was quick to point out that her involvement with it had been more motivated by financial gain than by any desire to spend time with children. As she spoke, I was beginning to get a sense of what Thea considered to be desirable, even required qualities in a teacher. These included commitment to and involvement with children, a great deal of patience, a strong work ethic as well as an ingrained respect of rules, all of which she felt she possessed, none of which she saw her sister as possessing.

Stories Interrupted in the Borderland

Entering an Unfamiliar Space

As Thea started her service learning, I wondered how a young woman from such a privileged background would feel entering the underprivileged environment of the youth club. I wondered, too, how a person for whom schooling and education held such importance would connect with kids who seemed to leave the world of school behind when they entered the club. Thea had known a world of extracurricular activities and travel opportunities; I assumed that for most of these children, the after-school club was the only extracurricular activity available to them. I imagined Thea's extensive experience with children would be helpful but I wondered whether the service learning experience would feel anything like summer camp or babysitting. Would Thea's love of children, her patience, and her work ethic transfer over to this setting and enable her to meet the needs of children whose backgrounds were so different from her own and from those of the children at summer camp?

At first, the kids she met in the youth club surprised Thea. In her field notes, she wrote that she expected very difficult kids, similar to those she met in the women's emergency shelter, the kind who were "very wary, didn't want anything to do with you" (Thea's field notes, Feb. 9, 2004). Instead, she found most of the kids happy to be there and amenable to interacting with her. As I considered their openness to her, I wondered if our pilot study was entering into play, whether the fact that Monique and I had been present at the club for our 4-month pilot study might have shaped the way Thea was welcomed into it. The children had grown accustomed to our presence and, when Thea joined us, they were perhaps more at ease than they might otherwise have been. Thea had her own explanation; she reasoned that unlike the children she had met in the emergency shelter, the children in the youth club had chosen to be there and that would probably be the reason they had a more positive outlook (Thea's field notes, March 9, 2004).

From the beginning, Thea was drawn to the younger children. I noticed her initiating contact with them, responding enthusiastically to their questions and fitting herself into their activities easily. Even the close, sometimes-overcrowded conditions did not seem to be a problem for her as she explained she was "used to the congestion of the dance studio and 75 kids at once putting on sunscreen at day camp" (Site-specific group conversation, Feb. 25, 2004). She seemed to slip easily into a role she knew well, that of camp counsellor, responding to the children's needs and adapting to unforeseen circumstances. I remember how she kept her cheery outlook even when a cooking club project took an unexpected turn.

> When we went to start cooking club, the kids that signed up were nowhere to be found so we decided we better get busy making [the cookies] and if they showed then they could help decorate. Sure enough all the kids showed up eventually, we had quite a mix of kids…The one problem we didn't realize was that the flour they had measured was whole wheat flour, therefore our cookies didn't turn out because they wouldn't stay together. (Claire's field notes, March 21, 2004)

Thea was quickly frustrated by differences between the youth club and summer camp. She noticed, for example, the absence of parents. As camp counsellor, she was accustomed to parents dropping off their children and taking advantage of these moments to exchange information with her on a daily basis. In the youth club, children were neither dropped off nor picked up by their parents; they typically came directly from school and walked themselves home, even on very cold, dark nights. Thea also struggled with knowing so little about the children. As camp counsellor, she was accustomed to having access to registration forms on which parents provided staff with all relevant information in regards to their children. She recalled how she worked with children with ADD and Autism whose conditions were known to her both through these forms and through direct daily contact with their parents. Although these forms did exist at the youth club, she, as a volunteer, did not have access to them. The staff occasionally shared information but the decision to do so was at their discretion and only on a need-to-know basis. Thea struggled with this unfamiliar feeling of having only partial knowledge; she found it much "easier to deal with the kids when she has that information" (Claire's field notes, July 2, 2004).

Thinking back to the photograph she showed me and to her comment about needing to "exert control over her sister," (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004) I remembered Thea's plotline of compliance and how she struggled with her sister who lived her life so differently. There were children in the research site who lived their lives differently as well, but Thea had no way of knowing whether any special circumstances might be coming into play. I wondered whether the lack of background information made her feel vulnerable and uncertain, in a way she hadn't felt as camp counsellor. While she voiced these feelings during research conversations, they were not reflected in her demeanour in the club. She was cheerful, responsive, and interested in interacting with the children. I noticed the individual attention and words of encouragement she spoke to the younger children—"You know what you're good at? Holding the bowl with your strong arms" (Claire's field notes, March 24, 2004)—as I imagine she would have done so many times in the dance studio or in summer camp.

The one characteristic the youth club did share with summer camp was that it allowed for involvement with children outside of school. This offered advantages and it was what drew Thea to the research project in the first place. Thea felt that "outside of the school…you find you get to know them so much more because they're not looking at you like 'Augh, you're the teacher'…you kind of get a sense of where they're coming from too" (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004). And noticing "where they're coming from" brought some unexpected surprises.

One night, as Thea and I left the kitchen, we noticed a police cruiser parked outside the youth club. Concerned, we entered the club and found the director, social worker, and two other employees in quiet conversation. In response to our question about the car, the director informed us the crisis intervention team had been called and were upstairs interviewing a child. No further information was volunteered, and having been briefed during our volunteering orientation on procedure surrounding disclosure of abuse by children, we knew better than to ask for any. Thea headed for home full of unanswered questions, considering the possibility that one of the youth club children with whom she had been playing that night might have been abused. This was not a familiar story for her and she was beginning to see how the happy carefree existence she had known as a child stood in sharp contrast to what some children in this community were experiencing.

> These are kids who come from difficult circumstances and that's tough to see and accept because my family is very happy. Many of these families live day to day unable to think about the future. (Excerpt from course paper, Apr. 3, 2004, Participant-approved translation by researcher)

The fact that these children could not count on the comforts and security she enjoyed growing up was confirmed one evening, when she noticed a poster on the wall of the day care kitchen.

> I noticed on the door to the kitchen, there was a sign about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, and how everyone can help prevent it. I found that to be very interesting because the kitchen is in a daycare. Most daycares (from what I have

> seen) usually have pictures up for kids, cute and friendly posters but this one was definitely a strange one to have up. I guess in the community there is a problem with FAS. (Thea's field notes, March 21, 2004)

She found the poster's presence strange and seemed caught off guard by the incongruity of addressing alcohol abuse in a daycare setting. She wondered whom these posters were targeting and, assuming they were targeting mothers, she found it hard to believe they would be put up in a location where children would also be exposed to them. I wondered if that was because Thea considered daycares the domain of children and, as such, expected them to keep children protected from unpleasant social realities such as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Daycares and nurseries were meant to be happy, child-friendly places, with these qualities reflected in their decor. For Thea, this poster told a very different story and for a prevention poster to have made its way into a daycare, FAS had to be a very significant problem among mothers in the community.

I wondered why Thea found the poster so unsettling. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome was something she had heard of before. Through her TA classmates and the emergency women's shelter, she knew that "people [had] problems" (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004). I wondered whether this might be the first time she had considered FAS in the context of children she was getting to know personally and whether this might be as close as she had ever come personally to such problems. Knowing the children, perhaps she was struggling with the idea that some of them would have mothers who would deliberately harm their health through alcohol abuse. She had such loving parents and such problems were not part of her prior experience. This must indeed have seemed an alien reality to her because it was not how mothers were meant to behave. From her vantage point, I wondered if the poster felt like an intrusion, an unwelcome reminder that she was in the presence of children whose families had significant problems, the kind she had never known during her childhood. Noticing and reflecting on the poster served as a wake-up call that every week in this kitchen, she stood among children who faced daily realities she found hard to imagine and accept.

Encountering Otherness at Home

As I thought about the knowledge of diversity that Thea was bringing into the research site, I had a sense that up to this point, she mostly associated diversity with people of other cultures. Her experience of otherness had mostly been in relation to people she had come into contact with while travelling or living outside of Canada. She had experienced people as other here at home, but for the most part they seemed far removed from her daily experience. There had been her involvement with Sarah and the TA classmates whose lives were very different from her own, but they had remained mostly at the periphery of her life at school. I concluded that her understanding of diversity had been shaped more by her experiences living and travelling overseas and noticing with curious interest how others lived. Travelling through Kenya with her parents, for example, Thea recalled seeing very young African girls caring for younger siblings. This was not a practice she was accustomed to, but it seemed that observing it in the context of a holiday in a foreign country made it acceptable. It was as if she had interpreted it as an unusual practice of people whose lives had nothing to do with her own.

This perspective would change for Thea as she came in contact with families who brought these practices from their home communities in Africa to their new Canadian community. Thea met four girls—Abigail, Alice, Lucy, and Larissa—two sets of sisters from two families who had recently immigrated to Canada from Sudan. They attended the club regularly and Thea saw them each week of her service learning experience. As she learned about their lives, she found herself struggling with family realities very different from her own and bumping up against an unexpected story of otherness at home.

Just as she had seen in Kenya, the four girls were expected to care for their younger siblings who were too young to attend the youth club. These toddlers were very much drawn to the club and often came looking for their sisters. Thea saw the girls react with exasperation as they turned away from club activities in order to accompany a sibling back home. The fact that these young children were allowed to wander within the complex and make their way to the youth club seemed odd to Thea. She wondered why their parents allowed this to happen.

> The parental support isn't there. I don't think these kids get as much attention. I think the families that give attention give it their own way and I don't think a lot of those African families understand how kids here are different…kids can run wherever they want…in their tribes for example, I saw 4-year-olds taking care of

> 1-year-old babies. I saw that too like their families were made to look out for his little brother. (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004)

From her point of view, caring for younger siblings was not a child's responsibility but a parent's. This was even truer if a child was sick. Thea was, therefore, very surprised when she arrived at the club one day to find Alice sick on the couch resisting the club director's suggestion that she go home. Alice insisted that if she went home, she would be unable to rest as she would be expected to care for her younger siblings. It seemed she was expected to fulfill her duties even when she was sick. Remembering her own experience of being sick as a child and the comforts she could expect at home, Thea struggled to make sense of Alice's life. In her opinion, a sick child deserved some loving attention, at the very least, a parent's cooperation to keep younger siblings away and provide the opportunity to rest. Why didn't Alice's mother look after her? Similar questions ran through her mind when she heard from Lucy that on early dismissal days, she and her siblings typically waited outside the youth club for up to two hours until opening time. She also learned that they often returned home at closing to find their parents already in bed. How could children so young be expected to complete their homework and put themselves to bed (Thea's field notes, Feb. 5, 2004), she wondered. Why didn't their parents tuck them in at night, at least wait up for them to get home? Thea struggled with these questions because she had lived such a different story of parental involvement.

> I just found that one interesting because when I was that age, my mom would drop me anywhere, soccer, dance, she'd drop me off and make sure I got in and

> was under someone else's supervision until she came back…like my parents were still putting us to bed [at that age]…I don't really know any families or any families that I babysat for where that was the case, you know where the kids kind of go to bed on their own. (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004)

Thea could remember coming home once in Grade 6 to an empty house but her mother had made sure she was safe by "calling every second" (Site-specific group conversation, Apr. 1, 2004). And although she looked after her sister on occasion in the absence of her mother, she had never carried the level of responsibility she saw placed on these girls' shoulders.

> that's how it's different for me…I made sure my sister got on the bus but at recess I wasn't following her around to make sure no big kids picked on her. I didn't follow her around…if we were at home I would go get mom. I looked out for her but not in the sense that they are expected to. (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004)

Thea wondered why the parents of the girls from Sudan weren't doing a better job of looking after their children. To her thinking, they seemed too often to be absent from the home or quick to delegate their parental responsibilities to their children. Contrasting this with her own experience of parents, she reasoned that their behaviour was perhaps the result of a lack of readiness to have children.

> I know I'm very fortunate but I also look at these kids and I go "You know what?" I realize now maybe you shouldn't have kids unless you're prepared to have them…even if you're married and everything that doesn't make you ready to

> have children…You have to be ready to have children because I see a lot of these kids from different families who really weren't ready to have kids or maybe weren't ready but thought they were. (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 1, 2004)

Perhaps they hadn't considered how much work it would be to care for children, particularly young ones and sick ones. Had they been more mature, they might have been better equipped to meet their children's needs more adequately. As far as she could tell from what she had observed, these parents were neglecting their parental responsibilities; they didn't care enough about their children.

Throughout her time in the research site, Thea admired the intricately beaded braids the girls from Africa wore. Each week, regardless of the length of their hair, they showed up with a different style of braids, often enhanced with colored hair extensions. Thea frequently complimented the girls and expressed her wish to have the same thing done to her hair one day. Towards the end of her time in the youth club, she followed up on just such an opportunity.

Thea was delighted with the novel, exotic look the braids gave her. But the braiding experience brought something more than a new look. From that point on, she seemed to have a new outlook on the way parents from Africa cared for their children. The experience of sitting still for nine hours while her hair was pulled and twisted into a cascade of intricately woven braids seemed to have opened her eyes to something she hadn't seen before and the braids came to mean much more than the exotic hairstyle to which she had initially been drawn.

> I do think [braiding] is a way of those parents caring for their kids. And they're transmitting their culture to these kids by these braids and that does show a form of caring because these things take hours to do...so this is hours of time that these parents are spending with their kids. So they do care. (Individual conversation, Oct. 27, 2004)

With firsthand knowledge of the number of hours required to braid one head of hair, she considered the number of children per family who showed up each week with new styles. She considered the amount of time that would involve each week, "because obviously if they are going to braid their kids' hair, they are spending a lot of time with them" (Individual conversation, October 27, 2004). But it wasn't simply a question of spending time with them. Thea also noticed the braiding was a way of "transmitting their culture" to their children. These patient mothers were not only spending time with their children through the braiding process, they were passing on their cultural heritage. Evidently, these parents were very "involved" (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004) with their children and were attending to their physical and cultural needs in a way she had not noticed before.

Thea seemed to be reconsidering the assumptions she made earlier that these parents might have been neglectful and lacking in maturity in the way they cared for their children. The braiding session opened her eyes to the fact that these parents were indeed caring. She now understood that they demonstrated their care in different ways, ways she had not previously considered.

Still, how could parents who were so attentive and involved with their children within the home let them roam so freely at such a young age outside the home?

> I just don't know if they know how to do something about it…like what got me is these kids come to the club randomly and they can stay and go whenever they want. And there's only a couple of times where we ever see parents picking their kids up…and that to me would be something to show that you really care about your kids…especially if they're younger. (Individual conversation, Oct. 27, 2004)

This question came up when Thea and I met in the fall, and, as she considered it, I noticed that something else had shifted in her thinking. While she no longer considered the parents deficient in their level of attention in the home, she was still unsure of their attitude toward the supervision of their children outside the home. She seemed now to be trying to make sense of this difference and I thought about the new point of view she was bringing to the question. It was as if she was now considering the question of the parents' behaviour outside the home with a form of insider knowledge to which she hadn't previously had access. Through the braiding process, she knew the parents to be caring and attentive. That being the case, there had to be, then, another reason they would let their children roam so freely here in the community. This practice had not been a problem in their home communities in Africa so perhaps in moving to Canada, these parents brought with them a sense of trust that the community would keep their children safe outside the home as it had done in Africa.

> so I just find it interesting and maybe some of these people just believe that the community is just so honest and safe and nothing will happen…maybe some

> people feel that the sense of community is so strong that they don't need to keep a watchful eye on them. (Individual conversation, Oct. 27, 2004)

I understood Thea was drawing on both her prior knowledge of African families in an overseas context and connecting it to her new knowledge of African families in the Canadian context. And while the parents' behaviour outside the home now made more sense to her, she was now expressing her concern that while putting so much trust in the community might have worked for these parents in Africa, it did not account for the different social realities in the Canadian context of which they were probably not aware. "Their level of trust is definitely different from us—you can't trust everyone out there, they feel they can" (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004). In this statement, I heard Thea identifying with the parents, almost speaking from their perspective and it was interesting to me how she had somehow travelled through the braids experience to their world, and was now seeing things from their point of view. These parents were indeed very different from her own. But she now understood difference did not make them deficient. She now saw how they demonstrated their care and attention in different ways from her own parents. Through her service learning experience, she seemed to be awakening to a new sense of otherness framed by cultural and contextual differences she had discovered through her contact with these families in the youth club community. She was experiencing diversity very differently from her prior experience of it overseas. I saw her as having a new sense of diversity, of otherness at home.

Encountering Otherness Among Others

Thea's knowledge of diversity shifted in another way as well. I had a sense, based on her prior experience, that diversity for Thea was about those who were different from her, that otherness was a bit like a category encompassing all those who were culturally, linguistically, socio-economically, or academically different from her. Within that category, there seemed to be a homogeneity that came from a shared experience of non-Whiteness. Differences between and among the various groups within the category of otherness seemed not to have retained her attention much, or at least, she seemed to have had little opportunity to explore them. The demographics in the research site offered just such an opportunity.

One evening, Thea, Monique, and I headed over to the kitchen with the six girls who would be joining us for Cooking Club. Of the six girls, one was from Sierra Leone, three were Sudanese, one identified herself as Jamaican, and one was Aboriginal. Thea was excited to be in the presence of such a diverse group: "As soon as we picked those girls, I knew we were going to have a good one!" (Thea's field notes, Apr. 12, 2004). I remembered having a similar reaction as we began mixing ingredients because at one point, with all six girls reaching into the bowl at the same time to work the cookie batter, one girl exclaimed, "Hey, look, we're all a different colour of brown!" (Thea's field notes, Apr. 12, 2004) and proceeded to draw attention to each girl's skin tone from lightest to darkest. I held my breath and listened with interest for what might be said next. After a moment of two, they resumed stirring the cookie dough, chatting away as if the comment had been about the colour of their shirts.

Later, as we waited for the cookies to bake, Thea, Monique, and I gathered the girls around to play a game. Eventually, interest in the game waned and we began talking about other things. At one point we asked them how they enjoyed the Angel Club[12] and how they all got along together. In her field notes, Thea wrote about the change she noticed come over Sandra, the girl of Aboriginal heritage, as the conversation unfolded around this topic.

> Sandra was very quiet during the conversation, which is abnormal for her; usually she is loud and talkative. We talked about bullying and how the girls get along with each other. Some of them revealed to us that sometimes they don't all get along. But it seemed like it was more the girls didn't get along with Sandra as much as anyone else. (Thea's field notes, Apr. 12, 2004)

Thea was puzzled by the fact that only Sandra's behaviour seemed to have changed. Normally quite talkative and extroverted, Sandra sat slumped in her chair, eyes downcast while the others continued talking. Thea wondered why she had stopped participating in the conversation. Just moments before, in the kitchen, this same group of girls had seemed at ease with each other, but in the context of this conversation, their racial differences were playing out very differently. I sensed tension among these girls; more precisely, tension between Sandra and the other girls. Thea noticed it as well. Normally outgoing and articulate, Sandra had gone quiet. Although the girls from Sudan, Sierra

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[12] The Angel Club was an activity group organized for girls aged 10-12 in the youth club. All the girls present that evening in our cooking club were regular members of this group.

Leone, and Jamaica were all from very different places and origins, it seemed they were somehow united in their difference from Sandra.

> she normally is outgoing and quite loud…but I found that interesting…my only idea would be because she's not around people she's comfortable with. She's not around people she's used to being around. She's just, she's like the odd one out. (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004)

She determined that although all the girls were of different ethno-cultural groups, Sandra's difference seemed to set her apart and set up a different social dynamic. Hers was a different difference. Thea wondered if Sandra's experience in this group was the reason she had always seen her before with Aboriginal children. They kept together, just as she had seen students of similar racial or cultural groups "stick together" in her school:

> I didn't have a lot of experience at all with Aboriginal families. I never went to school with Aboriginal kids…But it always seemed to me, Aboriginal kids stuck together. You'd see them out doing things together, but rarely did you see them hanging out with kids from other cultures as a group. They don't mingle with other cultures as much as a Black person or Chinese person might. They always stick together. (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004)

When we asked the club director about relations between groups in the club, we learned that there was indeed a story of racial tension, particularly between the immigrant children from Africa and the Aboriginal children. She explained that African children considered Aboriginal children to be unclean while Aboriginal children teased African children about being too dark. Quite unexpectedly, it seemed, our Cooking Club conversation had opened up a window on relationships among diverse groups within the club. I thought about Thea's initial reaction and I wondered if she entered the kitchen that night imagining that, just as we would be blending diverse ingredients into a homogeneous cookie batter, the differences among these girls would all blend into a happy consensual mix. Thinking back to the comment made about their respective shades of brown skin, an initial sense of consensus among the brown girls[13] (Paley, 1997) had given way to division and tension. Thea was beginning to see diversity as more than a cursory and consensual recognition of difference in racial origin. There was a complexity of relationship among the different groups in the club, some differences seeming to be more significant than others. This was an unfamiliar story of diversity for Thea. She was beginning to see complexity within the category of otherness.

Encountering the Possibility of Otherness in Herself

Another Cooking Club experience dispositioned Thea in her thinking about diversity. I had a sense that when she entered the youth club, Thea understood diversity to be something that concerned the ways of people who were racially, ethnically, linguistically, and socio-economically different from her. Diversity was something that had little to do with herself. As a White, upper middle-class woman, she had never considered herself as other, not even when she stood with her mother and sister among the curious locals in the Middle Eastern market. Her thinking began to shift after she met a young boy named Matthew at the club; through him, she began to see herself in new ways.

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[13] I borrow this term from Paley's (1997) *The Girl with the Brown Crayon*. The main character in this story, an African American girl in Paley's integrated Kindergarten class, refers to herself as a "brown girl." Resisting the "blackness" of the marker, she represents herself and other "brown girls" in her artwork with the help of a brown crayon she uses carefully to achieve the correct shade to represent her racial origins. Shades of difference and the complexities of race come to mind as I think of the connection between this story and the one I am telling.

One evening, Monique, Thea, and I headed to the kitchen with a group of children. Matthew, a boy of 7 and one of the youngest members of the club, was among them. Although we had seen him in the club before, this was the first time he joined us for Cooking Club. Matthew was eager to begin the baking activity. Touching everything, he peppered the air with his questions and comments about the various ingredients placed on the table. Very soon, however, he lost interest and turned away, busying himself instead, by assembling magnetic letters on the refrigerator door. Matthew could not yet read but was obviously burning to do so because whenever he felt he had put enough letters together, he called out for one of us to read back his word creations. Several times, the other children asked him to stop interrupting, talking, or moving, but he carried on with his own activity, oblivious to their requests.

Later, while the cookies baked and the other children had gone outside to play, Thea, Monique, and I shared our impressions of the Cooking Club activity. Our conversation turned to the topic of ADHD brought up by one of the children in relation to an upcoming blood test she would be taking. As we spoke, Matthew continued to play near us. Unlike the other children, he stayed in the kitchen and frequently interrupted our conversation to tell us of his father's work, books he'd read, books he was going to write, his card collection, his ability to do fractions and multiply in math. I noticed Thea observing him closely. Later, when Matthew left the kitchen, Monique and I commented on his bright enthusiasm and level of energy. Thea responded, "Hey you guys, that was me when I was his age. I was like that" (Claire's field notes, March 24, 2004).

In that moment, it was as if Thea had seen a glimpse of herself in Matthew, bringing back memories of the bubbly hyperactive child she had been. But she had lived a story of fitting in. Her difference had always been accommodated through her involvement in various sports and dance activities and the special attention of fondly remembered teachers. As she watched Matthew in the context of this youth club environment, she was seeing a hyperactive, enthusiastic, high-achieving child who was not fitting in. His hyperactivity was not appreciated; in fact, it consistently drew negative attention from the others. Even in the relatively unstructured environment of the kitchen, we, as adults, found his attentional needs challenging. Here before her was a boy who was living a story she, too, might have lived had circumstances been different.

Galda and Beach (2001) write about the way literature can provide windows and mirrors through which we can see the stories of our lives. By making connections between our experiences and those of characters in books we read, we can begin to make sense of "text worlds and lived worlds" (p. 71). As I considered the way Thea was reading Matthew's situation that night, it was as if she was seeing the story of her life in a new way through his in the youth club. With Matthew as her mirror, she was seeing a different story of herself, a different script that might well have come to pass had circumstances been different. She saw how Matthew's otherness marginalized him and, as she considered the similarities she shared with him, I wondered if she had also begun to consider her own otherness, playing out in her mind how her story might have unfolded differently.

I wondered whether Thea shared this story with her mother over the summer because when we sat down together for our fall conversation, she brought up her mother's experience in the emergency women's shelter again. This time, however, there was more to the story. Her mother told her of a woman she met while working there, "one of the first Canadian white women she dealt with…from a great community in Calgary…whose husband had done very well for himself" (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004). She had turned to the shelter to flee an abusive relationship and she and Thea's mother became quite close. They shared similar backgrounds and Thea told me how much of an impact befriending this woman had on her mother.

> It's been an eye-opener for my mom to get to know this woman's story…my mom said it could happen to people like us…this woman was being verbally and emotionally abused by her husband…It made my mom realize "Oh, this kind of thing happens." It doesn't matter what kind of family you're from. It can happen to anyone. (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004)

Abuse was probably not a story Thea ever associated with people who came from "great communities." Her mother mentioned this was the first Canadian white woman she had worked with in the emergency shelter. Not only had this woman turned her back on a life of privilege to flee an abusive relationship, she had taken refuge in an emergency shelter. Thea's mother found it startling that this woman had to turn to an emergency shelter. This was not a familiar story and I had a sense, through Thea, that it left her mother feeling vulnerable. She seemed to want to make sure that her daughter knew "this could happen to people like us" (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004).

I wondered whether the thought of someone willingly leaving a life of privilege behind to enter a shelter was something Thea had imagined could happen to her. As far as she had seen, the emergency shelter was a place where people from other backgrounds came. Galda and Beach's (2001) idea of windows and mirrors came to mind again. Through her mother's story, Thea was seeing a very different image of the emergency shelter and the people who turned to it. Here now was a place constructed, not as a gathering place for people from other backgrounds or from bad communities, but rather as a refuge that had taken in a woman whose background mirrored her own. Once again, the boxes and boundaries that Thea had created to make sense of otherness seemed to be fading or blending into each other and she was now considering diversity and her relationship to it in new ways.

During our fall meeting, Thea spoke about her sister in a way that also suggested a shifting story. Becoming a teacher had been Thea's life-long dream. Through her extensive involvement with children, she saw herself as possessing those qualities she felt were necessary to work well with children, namely patience, enthusiasm, and a solid work ethic and respect for rules. She saw her sister as lacking these qualities, and therefore believed it was unlikely that she would ever work successfully with children. Yet, when she returned home for the summer, Thea learned her sister had indeed been involved with children and quite successfully so.

Her sister had signed up for the work-study program at her school, the same program in which Thea had been involved three years earlier. Her involvement came as quite a surprise to Thea who considered it "just out of nowhere for her to do something like this because she doesn't have the patience, especially with kids" (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004). She was even more surprised to learn that when the program was nearly discontinued for lack of student volunteers, her sister took the initiative and succeeded in recruiting enough volunteers to keep it running.

> My sister this past year, I can't believe how much she's grown up…like the only reason she started babysitting is because she could make money off of it. That's all she cared about and this year they offered a program with work-study kids at school. Hilary signed up for it, there weren't enough kids…she got all her friends to sign up. (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004)

Thea had always been the sister to jump up and volunteer in that way. For her sister to do so was surprising. The fact that she had taken the initiative to save a program that was threatened with closure suggested a different story than the one Thea told of her sister "doing the minimum" and "getting away with it" (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004). What was even more surprising to her was how much her sister enjoyed being involved with a work-study student.

> She [works with] this girl named Molly…and she thinks it's the greatest thing ever. [My sister's] like "This little girl has taught me so much." And she's like "It's a 6-year-old in a 17-year-old body." She's the same age as my sister but she's like 6 years old. (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004)

Thea wondered about this unexpected turn of events. How was it possible that someone she had earlier described as lazy and impatient could now be working successfully with a child, let alone a special needs child? She wondered whether it was because volunteering with the work-study program allowed her sister the opportunity to be and play with children, without the burden of responsibility.

> I found this very interesting what she said she was doing because this would be something right up my alley….she's not in charge but she gets to hang out…So I think this is a way for her to do something by herself without having to take it full on. I think she's like, hey, these kids can be fun and they have personality you know and I don't know if she saw how each one was an individual. (Individual conversation, Oct. 27, 2004)

Or perhaps, it was the nature of the connection Thea's sister had with Molly that motivated her to continue her involvement. She had told Thea how she had learned so much from the little girl. It seemed to me that in addition to providing her with much needed attention, Thea's sister also seemed to have gained some benefit from it herself, learning many things as a 17-year-old from a child with the intellectual ability of a 6-year-old. She had even written about her involvement with Molly in an English essay. Thea too had enjoyed her involvement with Sarah, but it was Sarah who had written about it in school. I wondered whether her involvement with Sarah had the same impact on her that Molly's had on her sister. Regardless, this was not the familiar story of a sister "doing the minimum" and "getting away with it" (Individual conversation, March 1, 2004).

Considering this unfamiliar image, it seemed the separate plotlines the sisters had always lived were beginning to intersect. Thea was now bumping up against a new story of herself in relation to her sister. She had always seen herself as the born teacher, as the one who was successful with children. But here before her was a story of her sister working successfully with a special needs child. Perhaps Thea was beginning to reconsider herself in relation to her sister, reconsider her prior assumptions about their respective goals. Might there be qualities her sister possessed that were conducive to working with children with differences? How might she have developed those qualities? Might it be acceptable to imagine teachers taking different paths to reach a similar goal?

Although I did not have an opportunity to explore these thoughts with Thea, her sister's story seemed to have triggered her to rethink her prior assumptions about what is required of teachers to work successfully with kids and to teach for diversity. The list of qualities she had always believed in perhaps needed to be reconsidered in light of this blurring of plotlines as her sister's world crossed unexpectedly over into hers.

Stories Retold

Reconsidering Diversity

When Thea entered the research site, I understood her knowledge of diversity to have come mostly from her experiences of overseas travel as a child with her family. The story she told of herself led me to believe she had a sense of diversity based mostly on impressions made while observing others from a distance and in passing. The experiences overseas triggered something in her because, throughout her life, she maintained a curious interest in people's differences. It was what first drew her to this project. Yet, as a member of the dominant socio-cultural group in Canada, she grew up in a sheltered and privileged environment that rarely offered opportunities for direct contact with people whose backgrounds were different from her own. Diversity was therefore something that existed largely at the periphery of her family and school experience.

Over the course of her involvement with the youth club, Thea came to understand diversity differently. Finding herself for the first time in direct and sustained contact with children whose backgrounds were different from hers, she began to see their lives in relation to her own and, in so doing, began to wake up to diversity. Otherness came to mean something more than what she observed with curious interest as a tourist. As she met individual children who shared stories of their lives with her in the youth club, she began to see their different ways of being were based on different understandings of the world from her own. She also began to see cultural diversity as something much more complex than she previously thought. Recalling the conversation and the tension she felt one night in the Cooking Club kitchen, she was becoming aware of the complexity of relationships that existed between and among diverse groups within the youth club. Finally, through conversation about her experiences both in and out of the youth club, she began to see herself in relation to diversity, to see herself as someone who could also be seen as different by others, someone who might have lived a different life had circumstances been different.

I saw these gradual shifts as ways in which Thea was restorying her knowledge of diversity. Having to rethink some of her prior assumptions around difference, she was shaping new knowledge. She articulated some of these new understandings of diversity following her service learning experience.

> Diversity in travelling is different because you're seeing the diversity in that country…We always talk about how people in different countries live differently than we do. We always talk about how their lifestyle is so much different than our lifestyle. But I think the diversity I learned through the work at [the youth club] was diversity in our own community, like how diverse all of us living in one city can be. (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004)

> It would be unlikely that unless I moved away and taught somewhere I would deal with different cultures I saw when I travelled in their country, whereas here you do deal with those different cultures but they're in a Canadian setting. I think diversity when you travel just opens your eyes to what is out there but when you work at the [youth club] it's like firsthand experience of what is out there within our city and what you may have to deal with. (Individual conversation, Oct. 27, 2004)

The fact that Thea spoke of "how diverse all of us living in one city can be" seemed to signal that she was now including herself within the diversity. To me, that indicated a shift in her perspective. In this statement, I also noticed how she saw a distinction between what she learned about diversity through her travels as a child and what she had learned about it in the research site. She recognized that travelling opened her eyes to diversity outside of Canada. But her experience at the youth club opened her eyes to "diversity in our own community." Lugones (1987) writes of the difference between travelling in the world as a tourist and world-travelling. The tourist notices things in passing as he moves from one place to the next, but remains well within his own perspective. The person who engages in world travel, however, leaves her own world to cross over into the other's world, remaining in it long enough to "understand what it is to be them, what it is to be ourselves in their eyes" (p. 17). I felt that Thea's experience of the braids provided that kind of "world travel"; she crossed over into the world of an African family living in Canada and emerged from her experience with a much different impression of their ways. By seeing how caring and attentive the parents were within the home, she could bring a different perspective to their relative absence outside the home. When she determined that their absence could be explained by their trust in a community that would keep their children safe, it was as if she was seeing things from their perspective. Setting prior assumptions aside, she was now trying to understand, from the immigrant parents' point of view. If travelling the world as a tourist opened her eyes, this kind of world travel perhaps opened her heart. Thea was thinking differently about diversity in her own community.

Reconsidering Herself in Relation to Diversity

I sensed that with this new understanding of diversity, Thea could no longer go back to living within the walls. Along with a new story of diversity came a new story of herself in relation to diversity. She had always thought of herself as a teacher and as she reflected on her experiences in the youth club, I also saw her reimagining herself as a teacher in response to what she was learning. Two stories illustrate how I saw Thea beginning to restory herself in relation to diversity.

At the conclusion of our conversations about the youth club, I asked Thea how she thought she could learn more about diversity. She explained that she would want to know more about the children's lives.

> I'd like to be a fly on a wall in those kids' houses to see what goes on when there's no one else around…Because I have a lot of experience with kids…working at day camp and stuff but you always see what they want to show you there. You don't always see what goes on behind closed doors. (Individual conversation, Oct. 27, 2004)

She had a sense that teachers and camp counsellors and those who work with children "see what they [the children] want to show" and that to really understand children, one had to learn about their home life. This was a new story about what was required to work successfully with children. She had always believed that what was needed was to love being with children, to be patient, and to have a strong work ethic. Here, however, she was drawing attention to the need for teachers to connect with children's lives.

Reconsidering Herself in Relation to Teaching for Diversity

When differences became apparent, as they did for her as she got to know immigrant children from Africa growing up in a Canadian context, then it was important to reach out across the gaps created by the differences. Thea brought up the story of a Congolese classmate, a mother, whose child had a teacher who reached out and helped her understand the role she was expected to have in her child's school experience in Canada. Noticing how often the child's work was incomplete, the teacher invited the mother in to explore the problem. In the course of the conversation, it became apparent that the mother knew nothing of the agenda or its potential as a tool to help her child remember his homework and help her review his progress. The teacher explained how it worked and in just a few days, the son did "a 180" (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004). The mother told Thea how much she appreciated this gesture from her son's teacher. Communication of this kind between home and school was not part of the Congolese mother's prior experience of school. Had she not taken the time to connect with the mother, the teacher might have concluded that she simply didn't care about her child's progress in school—instead, she reached out and helped her understand how she could help her son in school. For Thea to bring up this story, I felt that she could now imagine herself doing a similar thing.

> I think a lot of the parents of these kids do want to help and do care about their kids…they do love their kids…and want to help but they don't know how. So I think it's important that if you were to teach and you knew that you were in that kind of community or had those types of parents, if you reached out to them and attempted to help them, it's likely that they will help or get more involved with their children's education. Right because that's important to know because if the teacher doesn't reach out to them, they're going to think everything's going fine and they don't need to do anything, and they may not need to do anything. But

> sometimes reaching out…that opens the door for them and you. (Individual conversation, Oct. 27, 2004)

Reconsidering what it meant to be a good teacher, she could add another idea. Not only was it important to connect with kids' lives, it was also important to connect with their lives through the parents who had lived a very different school life from the one their children were living in Canada.

Another story comes to mind when I think of Thea reimagining herself as a teacher working with diversity. It occurred on the night Thea noticed the tension between Sandra and the *brown girls*. I knew she was troubled by the turn of events and she wondered afterward what she might have done to address the dynamic among the group of girls. The fact that Thea felt a need to address the tension was important; it signalled to me that she was attending to the lived reality of the girls assembled and imagining herself as a teacher helping them navigate through the tension. She shared ideas about what she might do:

> I think I would go about doing that by taking maybe just one of those girls at a time and putting them into a group with Sandra, with other kids too…to make them see that she's not as different as they think she is. And if you break that group, you know they're stronger when they're together. But once you break them down, how strong can one person be? And if there's one, in this group who can get along with Sandra and who has accepted Sandra, so that this other person who was part of, these five girls that were oh so strong, now has to work with them. And has to work properly with them, maybe then they'll realize "Oh, she's not as

> bad, you know what I thought about her before isn't true"…And if you could reach out to each one of them before you put them all back together, maybe all have a bit in them and that little bit can turn into a lot if they each…had a little wake up call. (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004)

As she spoke, I could see that Thea was trying to find ways she might work with the other girls to help them understand what it's like to be "an outsider just to make them see how it feels" (Individual conversation, Oct. 6, 2004). She spoke of teaching the girls how to attend to each other, putting themselves in the shoes of someone else. It seemed to me that her words reflected not only new understandings of the complexity of diversity, but also attentiveness as to how a teacher might teach others about diversity.

In her final interview, Thea returned to the story of her sister and shared what she had learned from it from the point of view of a teacher.

> I think especially with kids like my sister what I've learned is they do get their work done and they usually do fairly well. Sometimes you have to give them that space... I think when you have kids like my sister in the class, you have to give them space. And it's not that they're going to get out of control, enough space so that they feel they can work to their maximum potential. Because you know when you don't get in my sister's face and she can do whatever she wants, she gets it done because she does want to do well, but at the same time, she does it her own way. Whereas kids like me, I always was the big keener in the class who would do anything that's just how I was. And I've actually seen both like even when I teach dancing, I've seen kids who are like me, who always wanted to be the first

> in line, who always wanted to be the first one to do everything…and then I had the ones like my sister who would only do it properly when you were watching her, do you know what I mean? You know she has the attention, she'll do something…kids are so different. (Individual conversation, Oct. 27, 2004)

The youth club experience helped her understand the diverse backgrounds children can have and the variety of learning styles and attitudes that result from such differences. She no longer spoke of teachers needing to be a certain way or possess certain qualities. Rather, she now recognized, through her experience with her sister, that different paths could lead to success. As a teacher, she felt it would be important to create space for children to find the path that best fits them.

The Journey

As I looked back over the shifts that Thea made, I found it interesting that they occurred, or at least, that Thea became aware of them long after she left the research site. From early February until late April, we spent four hours together every Wednesday night at the youth club. Throughout this time, we also engaged in ongoing conversations about our experiences there. When the university term ended, Thea returned to her home city to work for the summer. We met once briefly in July when she came for a visit and then twice more in the fall, once she returned for the fall university term. It was during these fall conversations that the shifts in her understanding of diversity became apparent to me. While they were all initiated by moments lived out in the youth club, (the FAS poster, the braids, the brown girls, Matthew and the mirror), it wasn't until we sat together in the fall that I heard her trying to make sense of these moments in the context of her life. It was during these conversations that new stories emerged, or rather, that layers were added to stories she had told me earlier. It was then that she told me the story of her mother's friend in the emergency shelter. She also spoke of her sister's experiences with the work-study student. It was also then that she related the story of the teacher reaching out to her friend, the Congolese mother, in school. The emergence of these stories made me think that although Thea left the site at the end of April, she continued to think about her experiences over the summer.

I wondered whether stepping away from the youth might have helped knowledge to emerge in new ways. Returning home provided the opportunity for conversation with her mother and sister. It also meant spending the summer months working as a camp counsellor—working in this setting no doubt provided an opportunity to contrast her service learning experience against her summer camp experience and engage in further reflection. Schroeder (1996) writes of the experience of being "pressed up tight against the story" (p. 136), too close to it to sort thoughts and feelings. I wondered whether that might have been the case for Thea. Perhaps during her time in the club, she was too close to attend to what was happening around her and within her. Stepping away both physically and temporally and sharing her experience relationally through conversation with others seemed to have made a difference in her ability to make meaning of her experience. As had been the case for Monique, Thea's personal practical knowledge had continued to shift and unfold well past her service learning experience.

CHAPTER 6: JORANE'S STORIES TO LIVE BY

Stories Told

Seeking New Opportunities

On the day I visited the educational foundations class to find volunteers for my research project, I mentioned that I hoped to attract participants who were interested in joining me on an adventure. I explained that as a beginning researcher conducting a project in an after-school youth club setting, I was seeking participants who were willing to try something new and could be flexible with their time. It was this invitation to adventure that drew Jorane to the research project.

I learned that her adventurous spirit was part of a family story Jorane traced back to her grandfather who, in 1958, moved his family across the country in search of new opportunities.

> I like adventure. I like to see new things. I've always liked that aspect and I think I can track that back to family; my family has always been very adventurous in certain ways, starting with my grandparents who moved from Quebec City to Alberta in 1958. They drove to Alberta in a car with all nine kids. (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2004)

As a farmer and father of nine children, Jorane's grandfather worried that it would be hard for his children to secure a future in farming in rural Quebec. His parcel of land was too small to subdivide and there were few additional lands being allocated to farming at that time. A homesteading opportunity in Alberta beckoned and he moved his large family west to begin a new life there.

Jorane felt her father carried the same spirit of adventure as his father before him. Barely 6 years old at the time of the family's move, he told Jorane many stories of his childhood growing up on a homestead. One of his stories harkened back to the hardships pioneers endured many decades earlier. She told of a time when her father and his entire family nearly froze to death when their car broke down on a country road as they returned home from church one Sunday morning. It was 20 degrees below zero and the family spent the entire day huddled together under blankets until a passing vehicle rescued them in the early evening. She described her father as someone who "liked to see different things" and was "also kind of adventurous" (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2004). He liked to take his family on extended car trips and Jorane recalled that driving holidays to the United States every summer were an important part of her family story. When she was in Grade 2, her father's spirit of adventure took them to Saudi Arabia where he took a job as a machinist for a small petroleum company. At first a little hesitant to be moving so far away from home, Jorane recalled how much she enjoyed living in Saudi Arabia, particularly the opportunity to play with new friends from many different countries.

> All the kids in the apartment, some of them were English, some were I think Ukrainian and then others were Arabic and we used to play with them all the time. I loved it. Before leaving, I had mixed emotions. I wasn't happy to go because I knew it was far from Edmonton but I think after a while, I was really getting used to it because the social life was much better there. Every day, my brother and I were always around other kids playing and the neighbours would invite us all the time as well. (Individual conversation, Oct. 30, 2004)

Jorane grew into her own spirit of adventure and described herself as someone who "like[s] to be in a new situation where [she] can see new things" (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2004). It was this attraction to new opportunities that motivated her to leave her Francophone school in favour of a large high school attended by over 2,000 students. Unsure of what she wanted to do later in life, she was eager to explore course options beyond what her smaller school could offer. She had also become an accomplished gymnast and appreciated the potential benefits of training with a school team, which was only possible in larger city high schools. Along with four friends, she set out on a new adventure by enrolling in the larger school. One year later, all but one friend returned to the Francophone school. Jorane chose to stay on; she enjoyed the larger school because it was a place where she "got to see a new world" (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2004).

After high school, she continued to seek new opportunities, first travelling alone through Europe for a month and spending 6 months of the following year teaching ESL in Japan. Over the next few years, she travelled several times to South America and lived in several U.S. cities. She also became fluent in Spanish. Recently, she informed me she wanted to learn Arabic, an interest she shares with her father and traces back to her childhood experience of living in Saudi Arabia.

Doing Her Own Thing "For a Good Purpose"

When I met Jorane, she described herself as someone who was shy, independent-minded, and happiest "doing her own thing." She was quick to point out, however, that her independent nature was not a reflection of selfishness or self-absorption but rather the result of a strong need to act according to her principles.

> I like to do my own thing…my own thing but for good purposes. It's not just that I want to do things my way and that's it, you know, I always have reasons…callings and principles. (Individual conversation, Oct. 30, 2004)

This sense of purpose was also part of a family story that linked back to stories she told me of her grandfather and her father. I learned that in addition to being concerned for his children's future prospects in farming, Jorane's grandfather's decision to relocate his family to Alberta had also been motivated by his concern for their educational future. Prior to the family's move, the local school in the town where they lived in Quebec only offered classes up to Grade 6. Local children wanting to continue their education had to travel by bus to the next town, which was a considerable distance away. As a result, many children quit school to go to work. Jorane's grandfather wanted his children to be able to pursue their education and lobbied hard to get the Board of Education to build a high school in his community. The Board repeatedly refused to address his concerns. "Tired of not being able to make things happen" (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2004), he eventually gave up and moved west where he hoped to find a better future for his children, both educationally and financially.

Jorane told me a story of her father that suggested he shared a similar sense of good purpose, which she described as a sense of social responsibility or agency in "acting in good conscience" (Individual conversation, May 22, 2005). While the family lived in Saudi Arabia, Jorane's father's job was to teach Pakistani workers how to operate heavy machinery. These men were "fairly poor people who came to make money for their families back home" (Individual conversation, Oct. 30, 2004). He found his students humble and respectful and their attitude in the workplace was a welcome change from what he had experienced as a machinist in Canada. He began to take a special interest in their lives and was dismayed to learn that unlike him, they were required by the company to work 7 days a week. He found this discrepancy unfair and when he took his concerns to the company boss, he abruptly found himself without a job. Six months after they arrived in Saudi Arabia, Jorane's family were escorted to the airport and returned home to Canada.

A similar combination of sense of purpose and social responsibility seemed to guide Jorane's activities and interests as she moved from adolescence into adulthood. After high school, she began taking Spanish lessons which put her in contact with members of the Latin community. She started attending their social events and was particularly attracted to the Peňa evenings.

> A lot of these social evenings were like solidarity events. The first solidarity event I went to that was Latin American or Spanish was called a Peňa, which is an event that's organized by just regular people; they get together and whoever wants to volunteer to play music, read poetry, talk about issues, humanistic issues. They were very open. And Latin people love music so it's not like here where people get really shy to sing or play…I loved it. I mean I liked the interaction; I liked the varieties of subjects that they spoke about, even the jokes, the music, just everything. I mean for me, it just seemed like something so natural because with

> the English community or the English culture here with the young people, the only thing they're interested in is going out and getting drunk to have fun and that's fine when you're young but after a while, there's more to life than that. So that's why I got interested in this. I like to be in a situation where I can see and learn new things. And the music, the Latin music is very attractive because it's lively; it's emotional. (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2005)

Given her family story of social responsibility, it is not surprising that Jorane would seek out these solidarity events. She was drawn by both the emotional and socio-political nature of these evenings. In addition to the music, which she found artistically appealing, she liked the sense of community and social focus these evenings carried as people and families gathered together to sing, dance, share poetry, and discuss issues. Often there was fundraising for a particular cause. The social focus of these evenings was something she had not been able to find elsewhere. Peña evenings provided an opportunity for her to interact in a way that fit both her artistic and intellectual tastes, which, she recognized, were very different from those of her peers in both her school and home communities.

It was at one of these evenings that she met her future husband, a South-American student who had left home at the age of 14. He was an adventurer like herself and at a very young age, Jorane chose to build a life with him. This would be one of the many choices she made "independent of what [her] parents thought" (Individual conversation, Oct. 30, 2004).

> I remember my parents had a fight about that one day and I said, "You know what? I'm going to marry who I want." Because back in those days, let's say I

> was 16, 17, 18, even from before, I knew it was very common that Francophone families wanted their kids to marry into the Francophone culture…I think that's probably why I rebelled a little too because it almost scared me to have to, because when you're young you sort of listen to your parents and you take things a little more seriously. So for me to think that I would have to marry a Francophone when I knew in my mind there was nobody that I liked (laughter) like what am I going to do? So I think it was a little bit of a rebellion. (Individual conversation, Nov. 3, 2004)

Like her grandfather and her father before her, Jorane felt the need to take a stand and determine her own future. The path she chose was not an easy one and certainly not the one her parents would have wanted for her. She felt the weight of her parents' hope that she would marry a Francophone and thereby remain rooted in the community. But at that time, the community did not meet her needs; it was only much later and on her own terms that she would come to appreciate her parents' insistence on maintaining her own language and culture.

Before they married, Jorane travelled with her future husband to visit his family in South America. There, she learned the extent of his humble origins and became aware of the reasons why he, too, had chosen to chart a new life course outside the family fold.

> They live in a very poor environment, a poor neighbourhood. They're not conservative so when they met me…it was just very casual…they were very down to earth you could say. So for me the visit was very nice. The only thing was that I couldn't understand them. They spoke way too fast. So that part was

> frustrating…[My husband] is a very independent person. He left home because the home environment was very difficult. There were two families living together…that's quite a long story in itself but there was rivalry there…there were a lot of problems. And the grandparents lived in the same house as well…how many people would there have been? I would say between 16 to 20 people living in a two-bedroom house. (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2004)

It was easy to imagine how Jorane would have been drawn to a man who shared both her sense of independence and need for adventure. What I found harder to understand was how a Canadian girl who had grown up in a middle-class neighbourhood would have fared sharing such close accommodation with the many members of her future husband's extended family. Surprisingly, the living arrangements posed no problem to Jorane. She described herself as "just so excited to go to another country to visit his family…[to discover the] whole history to his family…it was such a curiosity" (Individual conversation, Oct. 30, 2004). She was also drawn to the sense of humanity and community she found in this overcrowded house. As she described her reaction, I was reminded of the spirit of purpose and community she had enjoyed at the Peña evenings.

At that time in her life, Jorane felt more at home in her husband's culture than in her own. Her father having married a Francophone from northern Alberta, Jorane had grown up Francophone in an Anglophone environment. She spoke French fluently but recalled the tension she felt as a child around issues of language and culture in her home. She remembered resenting her father's insistence that she and her brother speak French to each other at all times at home.

> in terms of keeping their French roots on my father's side of the family, it was extremely important to the point where we weren't allowed to speak English at home at all. So my father really was very strict in terms of keeping the language alive at home so we spoke French all the time. (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2004)

She also disliked commuting by bus to her school every day from the community where she lived outside the city. She recalled how the distance left her feeling isolated from both her friends at school and those from the community around her home.

> I felt a little bit like an outsider…I felt like I was isolated from the French community. So that's why for me, [moving schools] was kind of like freeing myself…I felt different and I also felt a bit isolated…from the rest of the English community at home because I didn't have time to have friends. I didn't have friends in [my community] because I went to school in the city. I didn't have much time because taking the bus from the city back home I would arrive fairly late and then in addition, I was involved with sports and music so I didn't really have time to take part in community events in my area. So I didn't exactly feel part of [my community]. (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2004)

Jorane felt frustrated by this situation. She was also unsure of what she wanted to do later in life, hence her decision to move to a larger school where she could access a wider variety of options. Even when the friends who had initially joined her at the new school chose to return to the Francophone school, Jorane stood her ground and stayed on to finish Grade 12. Moving to the large urban high school and later becoming involved with the Latin community allowed Jorane to find spaces for herself where she felt comfortable and where her artistic, academic, and intellectual needs could be met. In making these decisions that ran against the grain at times, I felt Jorane was following a family story of *doing her own thing with purpose*.

Prior Cross-cultural Experience

Jorane already had many cross-cultural experiences by the time the service learning project brought us together. Her first exposure to other cultures occurred when she lived in Saudi Arabia. Although her stay there was relatively brief, it had an impact on her. She and her brother attended school in a compound along with other Canadian and American children, but her family lived in an apartment off compound. Living outside the compound provided the opportunity for contact with local children as well as with children from many different countries around the world.

In junior high, Jorane recalled being swept up by the *Band Aid* and *We Are the World* fundraising initiatives. Looking back, she felt the global focus of these musical projects probably served to open her up to the world.

> My teenage years, Grades 7 and 8, that was the time when *Band Aid* and *We Are the World* were coming up so we were listening to that 10 times a day. It was on TV all the time. So I think that moment in my junior high years also helped me open up to the world. I think if that hadn't occurred, I would have remained a bit more into pop culture whereas this was something that I think helped to sensitize people. When you're a teenager, you tend to be attracted to what's on TV. I think

> because it was the teenage years, things were emotionally sensitive and because it was something that was conscience-oriented, it caught my attention. (Individual conversation, May 22, 2005)

In addition to bringing attention to the plight of the needy in other parts of the world, these aid projects also focused attention on the need for the fortunate to provide financial help to the less fortunate. They had a good purpose because they called on people's sense of responsibility towards others. It is easy to see why these *conscience-oriented* musical projects caught Jorane's attention.

I learned from Jorane that during her high school years, all the boys she dated were from different cultures. She explained why: "I looked for a certain quality and they just happened to be from a different country or from a different culture, skin colour whatever, for me that didn't matter" (Individual conversation, Nov. 3, 2004). After high school, Jorane's contact with other cultures continued through her travel in Europe and her extended stays in Japan and South America. Later, after she and her husband graduated from university, his work took them to live in many U.S. cities where, as a Canadian citizen, Jorane was unable to work. She kept herself busy by volunteering, through which she came into contact with people from many different racial, ethnic, cultural, and social backgrounds. In California, for example, she taught ESL to Korean children in a private school. In Boston, she taught Spanish to African-American preschool children and volunteered in a refugee centre where she taught Afghan refugees how to use computers. As recently as 2 years ago, she returned to her husband's home in South America and taught in a private English immersion school.

Even Jorane's favourite athletic involvement had an international flavour. She practiced Capoeira, a form of martial arts that originated with African slaves in Brazil. It was a sport that attracted her because in recreating moves the slaves had used to defend themselves against their oppressors, Capoeira combined dance, martial arts, and gymnastics. Apart from its cross-cultural appeal, it was also a sport that focused on community and equality, both of which would perhaps have nourished Jorane's sense of purpose and social responsibility.

As she reflected on her numerous cross-cultural involvements, Jorane seemed able to draw distinctions among them and to appreciate how they had contributed in different ways to her understanding of diversity.

> I think Europe probably was…more sightseeing. It was a quick…1-month trip…a few days in various cities so I just kind of got to see the surface of things. But my experience in Japan and Chile was more a living experience. (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2004)

> I mean, during my trip to Europe, I didn't get to meet the people as much. In Japan I found it difficult. Japan was more of a culture shock in the sense that it was difficult to talk to the Japanese people. We were not on the same sort of wavelength because we don't have the same understandings. But during the interactions I had in South America, the people were easier to converse with about similar things on the same sort of level. Whereas in Japan they tend to, you're sort of on a different level from them because they put themselves in a sort of level of

> admiration towards the foreigner. So they don't necessarily talk so much like you and me for example, they'll rather listen to you and they'll agree with everything you say. (Individual conversation, Nov. 3, 2004)

The level of attention to difference Jorane was describing struck me as unusual. She had noticed differences in the way she was able to communicate with people from these two countries. She was describing subtle signals she picked up when communicating with Japanese people which she had not felt when interacting with South Americans. She was also making a distinction between her sightseeing experience in Europe and her experiences in Japan and South America. As a result of her considerable cross-cultural experiences on both personal and professional levels, Jorane came to this project positioned as someone who was already attuned to cultural differences. She was already sensitive to cultural perspectives other than her own and had learned to become comfortable with people who lived and communicated differently. It was easy to understand why she was drawn to the multicultural focus of this service learning project.

One other involvement added insight to Jorane's cross-cultural understandings. When she and her husband eventually settled in Edmonton, Jorane took on step-parenting responsibilities for her husband's son. Despite the fact that he had two South-American parents, her stepson was growing up speaking English and resisting his father's efforts to teach him his mother tongue. The boy told Jorane he was interested in learning French but full-time studies and part-time work left her regretfully little time in which to teach him French or support her husband's efforts to teach him Spanish.

> Sometimes things don't happen as you wish because of the time restraints. Right now, I'm studying so for me it's very difficult to either teach [my stepson] French or Spanish. I just don't have time but my wish is to teach him both. I want my child to have a second language and for my stepson, because he's Latino…I would like him to learn Spanish so he can communicate with his family in [South America]. The problem is that he doesn't want to learn Spanish. However, we did put him in a course last year and it was very difficult. He was resistant to the idea but he loves French so I figured I can put him into French class you know as soon as I can and then maybe later on, he might be interested to learn Spanish. So I think it's more a matter of gaining a certain type of maturity as well because if you're young and you force somebody to learn another language that he's not going to be using let's say here in this society, that might be difficult. So maybe later on he'll appreciate it more. (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2005)

Her stepson's resistance to learning Spanish paralleled her own to speaking French as a teenager; I had a sense she was using her own experience of coming to appreciate her language and culture to guide him through a similar tension. She could understand his struggle to identify with a language, culture, and community to which he felt he did not belong. After all, it was only after she learned Spanish and crossed over into another cultural community that she came to appreciate her own language and culture. Perhaps helping her stepson learn French would have a similar effect on his attitude toward Spanish and he would become interested in learning it *later on*. She knew from experience that compelling him to speak the language at home would likely only create more resistance; she held firm to the belief that, given enough latitude, he would eventually become interested in his mother tongue. She saw it as a matter of gaining a certain type of maturity.

> I think, well obviously my vision is different today so back then for me the French community seemed too small but today I look at it as something different. I see it as something bigger. And also…I've matured and I think now I totally respect the idea of having a French community and keeping that alive as well within the English environment. For me it's very important…you know I've experienced many things: I've experienced the Spanish community because I've started learning Spanish and their culture and everything that goes with it. So now I have more respect for all languages in all the communities. So for me, every community is very important to keep alive. (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2004)

Jorane had come to appreciate her language and culture by leaving both her Francophone and Anglophone communities to occupy a "third space"[13] of liminality where she could negotiate her identity on her own terms. Uncertain of the outcome, she was opening up a similar space for her stepson by supporting his interest in learning French, hoping he would eventually come to negotiate his own cultural identity across cultures as she had. I saw this as an example of Jorane using the personal practical knowledge gained from her own experience to help her stepson negotiate the difficult process of building identification for his language and culture.

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[13] Bhaba (1994) draws attention to the interaction that emerges at the boundaries between two cultures. The place of overlap, referred to as liminal space, becomes a "third" cultural space where a hybrid identity is shaped on both conscious and unconscious levels.

Jorane's experience resonates with my own as I watch my teenage son grow up in a home environment which is linguistically and culturally very different from the one I experienced as a child. Like Jorane, I married outside the Francophone community. In addition to my own son, I have step-parenting responsibilities for my husband's children. Of German-Polish ancestry, both my stepchildren learned German as a second language in school. While I celebrate the many linguistic and cultural borders our home environment crosses, the reality is that unless I am alone with my son, our family interactions typically take place in English, which is the common linguistic denominator. My son's exposure to French in our home environment is, therefore, much more limited than mine was. I too hope that he will come to appreciate the importance of keeping our language and culture alive as he negotiates his identity in a multicultural home environment.

Shaping a Career across Multiple Interests

Becoming a teacher was not a life-long dream for Jorane. In fact, her decision to become a teacher unfolded over a long period of time. This may explain why she came to this study positioned as the oldest of the four participants. As she told me her story, I understood that she put careful consideration into choosing a career that would combine interests she had across artistic, linguistic, and scientific fields as well as combine her strengths and weaknesses.

As a child, Jorane was artistic and had always been drawn to the sights, sounds, and colourful costumes of other cultures.

> That interest might have come since I was a child. For example when you're a kid you watch TV or see magazines or encyclopaedias I mean you always see pictures of people from different countries and I think that's interesting…you see different costumes or you hear the music from different countries, you see it as something colourful and exciting and different, so the interest has always been there. I always loved watching folkloric Mexican dancers and also Ukrainian dancing and Scottish dancing; it's something that is different but it's attractive. So it was more of a physical attraction. (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2004)

As a student in school, she recalled how she enjoyed working on projects. In addition to providing welcome release time from seatwork, project work allowed for a measure of independence and provided a creative outlet for her need for artistic self-expression.

> I learned a lot with projects. For me it was projects all the way…that was my motivation. I like the fact that you can be creative and do your own research and then do something nice. I mean…I was artistic as well and it allowed me to use that artistic side. So in Grade 8, we did a lot of science, for example in geology, we created a dictionary. We also created papier maché models, and then we had to go and find information and put stickers on everything and then we had to present it to the class. (Site-specific group conversation, May 27, 2004)

Projects also allowed Jorane to combine her artistic side with her love of science. She had always loved camping and hiking outdoors and became a rock collector as a child. She remembered being fascinated when she saw "little pieces of Cheerios and Shreddies in the rock, which were obviously fossils" (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2004). When she started university, she chose to study geology, a field of study she saw as fusion of art and science.

> I decided to do geology because it's a mixture of science and art…it's not just pure science, it's not just calculation. When you're studying geology you read a lot of the history of the earth and it's a mixture between let's say history and science together so I like that aspect as well. (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2004)

It was not until her last year of geology that Jorane decided to become a teacher. Recognizing herself to be "a very impatient person who doesn't like to stay in one place for very long" (Individual conversation, Oct. 30, 2004), she found it challenging to sit still for long periods of time to study science. What held more appeal was the idea of becoming a science teacher; she imagined teaching would allow for a more dynamic involvement with science. She enjoyed spending time with children while volunteering in the U.S. and saw a career in teaching as an opportunity to bring science and children together in a dynamic way.

By choosing to become a science teacher in a Francophone or French Immersion school, Jorane was combining her interest in science with her love of languages. She initially thought of becoming a translator but having found it hard to write in school, she could not imagine herself spending hours poring over subtleties of meaning as she translated texts from one language into another. Teaching science in French to teenagers and perhaps doing so through project work would allow her to bridge art, science, and language.

As I considered the way Jorane came to her decision to become a teacher, I was impressed with the way she shaped a career for herself by combining her interests across so many areas: artistic, linguistic, and scientific. Becoming a teacher to her meant "being in contact, being dynamic, and doing a lot of different things" (Individual conversation, Oct. 30, 2004). In some ways, it seemed her decision-making process had been quite deliberate; she showed surprising self-awareness in considering the impact of her strengths and weakness on her career decisions. Jorane knew that school was not always a good fit for her; she struggled with her impatience, her love of change, and her inability to concentrate for long periods of time. Recalling how she came to her decision to move to a larger high school, she recognized her attraction for new opportunities and the challenge this would pose to her ability to stay focused.

> As far as the change goes I like change so for me it was, it was an adventure. But let's just say there was a lot of distraction like I'm a person who sometimes can get easily distracted because there's so many students, so many things to do, you want to do everything but you can't accomplish everything. (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2004)

It seemed that just as she had done at 17, Jorane was still trying to take advantage of as many opportunities as possible while trying to stay focused on the task at hand. I knew, for example, that in addition to her responsibilities at home with her husband and stepson, she was juggling full-time studies with part-time work teaching Spanish. When I asked her whether she would be able to sustain all her involvements through the research project, she responded that she would find a way to make things work. I had a sense that being involved with teaching Spanish was as important to her wellbeing as becoming a science teacher. In fact, she described her ideal teaching position as being in a large high school where she could teach both science and Spanish.

It seemed that just as Jorane had come to negotiate her identity by crossing cultural borders, she was trying to shape a professional identity that crossed many fields of interest. In some ways, she seemed deliberate in her intentions, in others, very uncertain. In that regard, Jorane seemed different from many education students who enter the field with certainty about their future career. Her personal and professional experiences had brought maturity and self-awareness that did not seem to allow her to look to the future with certainty. As she stood poised to begin her final year of teacher education, she continued to move forward with purpose. She was not quite sure what the future would bring but she was hoping to forge a place for herself in the teaching profession that would fit her needs and varied interests.

> I know I like new challenges and I'm not afraid of change. I'm not a patient person…So we'll see how long I'm a teacher for (laughter). We'll see. Well no, teaching is not so bad because it's dynamic…so I might stay in that for a bit longer (laughter). (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2004)

Stories Interrupted in the Borderland

Entering an Unfamiliar Space

Given her extensive cross-cultural experience, I wondered why Jorane was seeking to learn more about diversity through the service learning project. She explained it was the opportunity to interact differently with other cultures that motivated her to participate. Up to this point, all her cross-cultural involvements had taken place within school contexts and, looking ahead, she knew that she was less than a year away from her practicum placements. She was, therefore, attracted to the opportunity for out-of-class engagement with school-aged children; she had a sense that she would learn from such an experience.

> My experience was in the classroom…I have quite a bit…and then I'm going to teach in a classroom environment because I'm doing my Bachelor of Education so I wanted to do something different. And for me, obviously, multiculturalism and diverse communities always interests me so I saw this as something different to experience and I knew that I could learn a lot from this as well. (Individual conversation, Feb. 29, 2004)

When she first entered the youth club, Jorane described herself as being "just overwhelmed" (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 1, 2004). The size and physical space of the club surprised her, as did the busy atmosphere she found within it. "I think the first time was unnerving…maybe even a little uncomfortable because I'm not used to being around so many kids like that" (Site-specific group conversation, March 14, 2004). Even after several weeks, she still did not feel comfortable: "I'm still in the process of probably getting comfortable with the area and I don't know if the reason is that it's a huge, huge place and there's like so many kids and different age groups" (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 1, 2004).

During the earlier weeks of her service learning, Jorane struggled to understand the routine of the youth club and her role within it. "OK where do I begin? Where do I go?" (Site-specific group conversation, March 14, 2004). There were no rules posted anywhere, nor did she recall them being addressed in the orientation session she attended on her first day there. While she could well have approached other club employees to obtain information, Jorane chose to rely on her skills of observation and work through the period of adjustment at her own pace. She was comfortable watching events unfold from the margins and, much as she had done in regards to her stepson's cultural identification process, she chose to adopt a wait and see attitude.

> Basically I just didn't know what I was supposed to do. And it's true we didn't talk…the other volunteers wouldn't introduce themselves; you had to go up to them and actually talk to them. And actually I found them a little bit even difficult to talk to…I found that part a bit frustrating…I knew that the first time would be a bit like entering new territory so usually when you go to a place the second or third or fourth time, then you start to get more comfortable, but as far as having the rules, this is one thing I'm still not very clear about. (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 1, 2004)

Jorane was a quiet presence in the club. If she felt uncertain about her role within it, her demeanour did not betray her feelings. Observing the way she went about making sense of this unfamiliar environment, I was reminded of her plotline of moving forward with purpose. She typically began her volunteering evening by quietly making her way from room to room, taking stock of who was present each day and what activities were going on. She often stopped to observe the children in the art room, admire their creations, and provide positive comments. She also found her own way to connect with kids in the main room where the activity and the noise created by the games tables, high ceiling, and reverberation off concrete walls made establishing contact more challenging. I noticed the way Jorane strategically positioned herself on the edge of a foosball or pool game underway, standing just far enough to avoid being intrusive and close enough to offer to join the game as soon as a player turned toward another activity. In this unfamiliar context she was forced to try to connect with youth in ways she had never before experienced, either within her family or in her many involvements with children, and she found the experience challenging.

Encountering Conflicting Responsibilities

As I considered which dispositioning moments to highlight in Jorane's service learning experience, it seemed that specific events did not stand out as they had for Monique and Thea. Reflecting on why this might be, I wondered whether it was because Jorane came to this project as someone who had been somewhat dispositioned her whole life. She described how she grew up feeling as if she did not belong to either the Francophone or Anglophone cultures of her school and home communities. She eventually found her sense of belonging in the Spanish community. Through her husband's family, she also encountered social realities different from her White middle-class experience. Given her exposure to these cultural and social perspectives, it is likely that the backgrounds of the children she encountered in the youth club were perhaps less unfamiliar to her than they were for the other participants.

I wondered, then, whether I was looking for shifts in Jorane's understanding of diversity that might not have occurred. Or perhaps, shifts might have taken place in more subtle ways. Returning once again to my field notes and transcripts, I noticed that Jorane's voice was far less present than those of the other three participants. This was particularly true of the collaborative conversations where all four participants and I met together. Although Jorane was always an attentive and interested participant, she was much less forthcoming than the others in sharing her perspective on topics discussed. Much as she had done upon entering and throughout most of her time in the youth club, she seemed to position herself at the margins of many of our research conversations. Field notes might have yielded clues as to what particular events caught her interest but unfortunately, Jorane struggled with that expectation. Very early in the project, she confided her dislike of written work and given the number of hours she was already committing to volunteering each week, I had not insisted she take up my invitation to write field notes. Taken together, these considerations made it more difficult to identify moments where Jorane bumped up against realities different from her own. Nevertheless, some subtle shifts did occur and I felt she emerged from her service learning experience with new understandings about diversity and about herself in relation to it.

All four participants were full-time students in the teacher education program when they took part in this research project. Unlike the other three, Jorane also worked part-time teaching Spanish and fulfilled additional responsibilities at home as a wife and stepmother. The challenge of meeting these multiple commitments was compounded by the particular timeframe during which the service learning took place. Aurora, Jorane, and I typically met at the club on Wednesdays at 4 p.m. and volunteered until closing time at 8 p.m. This after-school time was particularly busy for Jorane who had to rush home from classes to provide a quick meal for her stepson and at times, drive her husband to work prior to joining us at the youth club. I had a sense that even once she arrived, her stepson remained very much on her mind because unlike the children who came together in the youth club, he was spending his after-school time alone at home. One evening, as we sat eating together in the kitchen, Jorane wondered aloud whether it might be possible for her to bring her son along to the youth club rather than leave him at home (Claire's field notes, March 11, 2004). Although she never pursued the idea, her words signalled the strain the volunteering was putting on her and I worried whether she would be able to maintain her commitment to it.

The tension created by Jorane's dual roles as stepmother and volunteer shaped how she experienced the youth club during that critical after-school time frame. As the weeks went by, she became more and more conscious of the struggle to combine her many obligations with volunteering responsibilities. She was feeling overstretched and was often tired. Although she never expressed regret at having taken on the service learning commitment, she voiced her concern that she might be "trying to do a good job of both [responsibilities] and in the end [doing] a mediocre job at both" (Individual conversation, Oct. 30, 2005).

Her words resonated for me; like Jorane, I struggled with conflicting responsibilities and divided loyalties during the after-school hours. I too had a son spending his after-school hours alone at home while I volunteered two nights a week in my research sites. Carrying a cell phone alleviated my guilt to some extent because it allowed for a brief conversation at the end of the school day. As homework issues came up, however, the phone calls lengthened or became more frequent and at those times, I felt challenged by my dual responsibilities as researcher and mother.

Encountering Her Way of Being With Others

The cooking club environment also provided an opportunity for Jorane to learn something about her style of interacting with children. Each week, as we set up our cooking club activity in the large youth club kitchen, Aurora, Jorane, and I divided the participants into three groups. Stationed along a large rectangular table in the centre of the kitchen, each group worked independently on the recipe but remained in close contact. The proximity provided Jorane with an opportunity to contrast approaches among group leaders and she became aware of herself in relation to children in a way she had not considered before.

Jorane noticed for example that she was less "hands-on" in her approach to working with children, preferring to let things evolve rather than provide explicit directions. As I considered Jorane's stories to live by, two thoughts came to mind. First, I recalled the Peňa evenings Jorane had been drawn to and I had a sense these evenings were not structured but rather unfolded in an improvisational manner depending on who attended. I knew that Jorane felt comfortable in such an environment. Second, I imagined her prior volunteering experiences might be shaping the way she was interacting with the children in the youth club. As a resource room teacher's aide, she had worked in an intimate environment with small groups of children under the direction of the classroom teacher. Without a sense of responsibility for the group as a whole, Jorane probably held more of a supportive role, quietly doing her work in the background. Jorane seemed to slip comfortably into this familiar role in the youth club as she worked with her cooking group.

In working with children, typically events do not unfold as expected and a hands-on and improvisatory approach becomes necessary. This came to Jorane's attention one day, during a cooking club activity that called for the use of a Mixmaster. Moments after showing three girls in her group how to plug in and turn the appliance on, Jorane turned her back to return to the rest of her group who were working on another part of the recipe. Within moments, shrieks erupted as the Mixmaster roared and sputtered chocolate batter the height and length of a wall behind the counter.

> I just made sure all three girls knew. But you stood by them as they did it and I walked away and started with another girl with the dry ingredients; I wasn't supervising as much…I just assumed that they wouldn't do anything wrong but, I didn't think I needed to stay with them because you know I'm just used to kids

> staying in line for me so it's very interesting. (Site-specific group conversation, March 14, 2004)

Assuming the girls would know how to operate a Mixmaster, she did not think to stay with them to supervise their progress. As she reflected on the event, she recognized that she made assumptions about what these girls knew based on her personal experience of kitchen appliances. Evidently, there were times when children required direct instruction and structure and, while she felt more comfortable letting them lead the way, the incident made her realize that she needed to be more actively engaged with children:

> I wish I could be a little bit more a leader like have a leader role but that's just because I've seen [my husband] with that role too and I sort of not envy him but you know I wish I had those qualities too…I think because he has a lot of experiences in life, interesting experiences, a lot of people are curious to enter into his world and his conversations. So as for me I'm not really that good at doing that. So that's why I just take sort of a quiet position in groups. (Individual conversation, Oct. 30, 2004)

As she spoke these words, I thought again of the way Jorane seemed to live much of her life observing others from the margins. She recognized that her gravitation towards the margins was partly a learned response of stepping back in deference to more dominant personalities in her life. "My father was fairly dominant in the sense that I couldn't really argue with him about anything" (Individual conversation, May 22, 2005). She described her husband as a natural leader who seemed to attract people to him without effort. As she began to consider how she would position herself in a teaching relationship with children, she seemed to be waking up to the reality that while she was comfortable letting and watching things unfold as she had done during Peña evenings, as a teacher's aide and more recently as a youth club volunteer, this would not always be an effective approach. She was beginning to appreciate that to connect with children as a classroom teacher, it would be helpful to assert herself and take on more of a leadership role.

Encountering an Unexpected Sense of Purpose

Despite her extensive involvements with children in schools, Jorane had little experience working with teenagers. In fact, the possibility of working with this particular age group was one of the reasons she was drawn to this service learning project. Very quickly, however, she discovered that connecting with teens in the youth club was a challenging endeavour. She found the younger children "easiest to deal with or let's say to have sort of a friendship relationship with" (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 1, 2004) because they were open and affectionate with her and she could engage them in physical activities such as gymnastics. She recalled a particularly enjoyable weekend.

> I think yesterday was one of the days where I had the most fun. I just felt more comfortable and I think because the younger kids are a lot more open as well…doing gymnastics with them…Well you're the coolest person doing handstands and cartwheels and all that stuff…I was like the coolest person there…So I was leaving and all the girls came to hug me. So that was pretty good. (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 18, 2005)

Jorane described the teenagers in the youth club as having “attitude” (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 18, 2004) and being “pretty cold” (Individual conversation, Nov. 3, 2004). She was particularly troubled by what she referred to as their *negative talk*. A high proportion of the teen members in the club were of Aboriginal heritage. If Jorane had little experience working with teenagers, she had even less working with Aboriginal teenagers. Nonetheless, during the few months she spent in the youth club, I witnessed a number of conversations she had with Aboriginal teens and came away impressed with the way she was able to enter into relationships with them. I highlight Jorane’s involvement with two particular teens as a way to demonstrate how she drew on her cross-cultural knowledge to establish relationships with an unfamiliar culture.

One day, just before the Easter weekend, as Jorane and I left the club, we walked by Alfred, a 13-year-old Aboriginal boy who attended the club regularly. Jorane wished him a pleasant weekend, to which he retorted, “Don’t talk to me” (Claire’s field notes, Apr. 7, 2004). I was taken aback by the aggressive tone of his remark and wondered how Jorane would react. Turning towards him, she smiled and said, “I have a brother just about your age and he talks like that too sometimes” (Claire’s field notes, Apr. 7, 2004). Ignoring her comment, Alfred began tossing his basketball in the air. Jorane stood before him and after a few more tosses, she plucked the ball out of the air and held it. She smiled warmly at him. I noticed Alfred’s look soften. As she handed back his ball, she again wished him a good weekend. This time, her gesture was met with a simple nod. We continued on our way.

Later, during a research conversation, I asked Jorane why she had neither gotten mad nor tried to discipline Alfred. She explained that in her opinion, "negative talk would breed negative talk" (Individual conversation, Nov. 3, 2004) and she was determined to break a cycle with which he was probably all too familiar.

> My reaction was, OK, this kid has parents who probably tell him what to do in a very negative way all the time so that's the way he's talked to all the time. That's the way he's used to and that's how he gets attention because if you just give him attention like normal, it's not good enough for him. But let's say if he acts like that, he knows he's going to surprise people. It's like he's looking for attention. (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 18, 2004)

Jorane seemed to understand that Alfred's aggression had less to do with feelings he might be directing at her and more to do with his lived experience. Looking beyond the words he had spoken to what might be shaping his attitude, she was seeing connections between his negativity and what he might be experiencing at home. Alfred seemed caught off guard by her reaction; her calm and friendly demeanour were probably not what he had expected or typically experienced based on my observations of his interactions with others in the club. By choosing to respond as she did, Jorane provided him with positive attention, which served as the foundation for a relationship.

Another teen who caught Jorane's attention was Tracy, a 12-year-old Aboriginal girl who was an active participant in the cooking club. Tracy defined herself by saying mean things to others. Although Jorane found Tracy's negative comments troubling, particularly those directed at her, I noticed that she always managed either to ignore them or to meet them with humour. Again, I asked her about her reaction to Tracy's comments:

> She likes to challenge me a lot but I think she challenges everybody but not in, so much a mean way. She can be mean if she wants to but…it's all been in a fun kind of way. I think she likes to get my attention. I'll just ignore that. Like I just don't pay attention to that kind of comment…I think you have to deal with everybody differently but sometimes it's hard to tell when you don't know what kind of baggage they're carrying. (Site-specific group conversation, May 27, 2005)

Jorane seemed to be paying less attention to the words Tracy had spoken than the reason she might have spoken them. When I commented on Jorane's non-judgmental attitude toward Alfred and Tracy's negativity, she explained that she felt they were exhibiting attention-seeking behaviours and that "if I had gotten angry then [they] would have probably started poking at me more negatively again" (Individual conversation, Nov. 3, 2004).

As I considered Jorane's attitude toward these two Aboriginal teens, I concluded that although the service learning placement had put her in contact with an unfamiliar age group and more importantly, an unfamiliar cultural group, she had not really been dispositioned by the experience. Drawing on her own resources, Jorane had been able to interact successfully with Aboriginal teens. She demonstrated her ability to approach them with care and respect without imposing herself or her expectations of behaviour on them. This was probably the result of the extensive cross-cultural knowledge she had already developed prior to beginning the service learning placement. What impressed me in particular was that Jorane not only knew about cultural differences, she also knew how to enact that knowledge in order to interact with cultural others in appropriate ways. She was rewarded for her efforts by earning the respect of Alfred, Tracy, and several other teens in the youth club.

While Jorane successfully managed to shift the negative attitudes of individual Aboriginal teens, she was less successful in shifting the overall atmosphere of the club. She struggled with the individualistic, competitive attitude many teenagers brought to the club. As I observed her moving about the club connecting with individual children, I had a sense she was struggling to find her place with the group as a whole. As things stood, the youth club was not an environment conducive to her fulfilling her goal of moving forward for a "good" purpose and Jorane was more comfortable remaining in the margins.

One day, well into her service learning placement, Jorane noticed a change in the club atmosphere. She arrived to find the children teamed up for a game of *Survivor* which was in full swing. As she watched the game unfold, she noticed how the competitive individualism and negative talk had given way to collaboration, teamwork, and encouragement. She began voicing possibilities for other club activities that might sustain the sense of community she had a glimpse of that day.

> I just had a couple of ideas because watching the Survivor thing sort of gave me ideas…just the fact that the Survivor game is very competitive as a game and I'm thinking these kids are so competitive by nature because of the environment they

> live in. I think these kids need to learn how to share with one another and I think so far the Survivor game has sort of brought them together a little bit with more interaction between us and them. So I was thinking maybe some games could involve putting on a play where they have to interact together…once in a while there could be a play or something that everybody can get involved in at least whether to participate in it or to watch it. I think that would be kind of interesting because it's a positive activity, it's not competitive. Another thing, because it's spring, I was thinking of planting stuff outside, planting seeds, planting flowers. (Site-specific group conversation, May 2, 2004)

Evidently, the Survivor game triggered something in Jorane because there was passion in her voice as she spoke these words. It was as if by bringing children together for a collective purpose, the game brought, to the club, a sense of community values which were much more in line with the kind of atmosphere she found during Peña evenings. On that day, for the first time since the service learning began, I noticed how Jorane brimmed with excitement about future project ideas that might serve to shift the tone of the youth club. The play she was envisioning would provide an opportunity for every child to participate, whether as actor or spectator. Planting projects would have both a practical and an aesthetic purpose. Vegetables could be planted in the communal plot nearby and flowers could be planted outside the club in a collective effort to beautify the neighbourhood. Inspired by initiatives she learned of in South America where "they have leaders, student leaders who go into the neighbourhoods and they actually beautify the neighbourhood, making it their own" (Site-specific group conversation, May 2, 2005), she began planning additional community-based projects including beautifying the youth club with a mural. The Survivor game provided a glimpse of a community coming together for a "good" purpose. In so doing, it called forward a narrative thread in her own story and prompted a shift in her level of interest and engagement in the youth club.

Jorane's sudden and unexpected enthusiasm led me to believe that the Survivor game served to disposition her. Until that point, she had been content to exist in the margins of the youth club. But when she walked in that day to find that individualism and competition had given way to collaboration for a collective purpose, she was surprised and began attending in a new way. To her, the Survivor game had been much more than a game played for fun. It served as an example of a club coming together for a "good" purpose with which she could identify. That afternoon precipitated a change as I felt her moving from the margins to the centre, finding both her voice and a place she could be comfortable in the club. She spoke of, and imagined herself, leading projects that would bring youth club members to work on collective projects for the benefit of the environment and the well-being of the community. It was unfortunate that the service learning project ended before Jorane could follow through on any of her ideas because it would have been interesting to see how she might have lived out both her new leadership role as well as additional commitments for involvement with club youth and staff.

Stories Retold

Reconsidering Diversity

Looking back over her 4-month involvement with service learning, Jorane concluded that, as expected, interacting with youth in an out-of-school setting had indeed been a learning experience.

> Even though I've had experience [working cross-culturally] which may have helped me to sort of walk into the place, the youth club experience makes me feel more comfortable about being with kids in school than had I not had this experience. (Individual conversation, Nov. 3, 2004)

> I gained experience and understanding of things and obviously confidence because I think when you volunteer, you're in a different environment where you're there by choice. And I think you learn a lot by interacting with different people as well and you get to understand them a little better. (Individual conversation, Nov. 3, 2004)

Although she had cross-cultural experiences prior to the service learning project, much of her involvement had been with the Latin American community, people she described as "very easy to get close to, because they're used to that family closeness…they're like that with everybody, so that part for me was very easy, whereas this was a little bit more difficult" (Individual conversation, Nov. 3, 2004). Jorane found being with Aboriginal teens very different from what she had experienced in the Latin community. She was not used to "being around kids that are not easy to talk to [and] have negative or aggressive behaviours" (Individual conversation, Nov. 3, 2004).

> This experience was a new one for me…for the age group as well…and also the diverse group. You know being around a lot of Native people as well. I mean that's sort of a territory where I'm not, like I don't know how to approach these people as well…being that they're sort of you know probably living in a more marginalized way and probably spending less time you know with their family, like I don't know if they have more or less time with family, but it just seems that they're very much on their own…very much independent…so it's kind of hard to approach these people. Also, it's a new culture; it's a different culture. So for me it was all brand new and even though they're Native people, like I think Native people in the city probably have a different dynamic in society than Natives in, let's say in reserves. And I think it just seems like there's a lack of family ties here. And I think that a lot of it has to do with their history, you know being sent to residential schools. (Individual conversation, Nov. 3, 2004)

Jorane's tone was tentative as she described the experience of interacting with this unfamiliar culture and her choice of words also reflected her uncertainty: "being that [Aboriginal kids are] *sort of*, you know *probably living in a marginalized way* and *I don't know if* they have more or less time with their family, but it just *seems* that they're *very much on their own*." When she referred to an apparent "lack of family ties" it seemed to me that Jorane was connecting Aboriginal youths' difficulties to families but not in a way that related them to deficient parenting. I understood her to be relating their challenges to the breakdown in family ties within the Aboriginal community living in urban settings. I took that to mean that Jorane was able to situate the challenging behaviour of individual Aboriginal teens she observed in the youth club within a larger social and historical context. She recognized that their difficulties could indeed be linked to home environments that had collectively been shaped by the legacy of residential schools. Not only did this reflect an awareness of Aboriginal history, it also showed how Jorane seemed to be able to connect what might be abstract historical notions to their sociocultural manifestations in the daily life of the youth club. With these understandings came the ability to empathize with how hard it would be to walk in their shoes. Jorane neither assumed to understand their issues nor glossed over them; rather, she seemed genuinely interested in trying to understand and relate to members of this unfamiliar community, adjusting herself to their ways of being instead of expecting them to conform to hers.

Picking up a level of independence in Aboriginal teens and sensing how different that made them from youth she knew in the Latin community, she adopted a more cautious approach. With careful observation and a good amount of improvisation, she set about joining the flow of life in the club much as a traveller does upon arriving in the unfamiliar territory of a foreign country. Intent on fitting herself into the host culture as quickly as possible, she drew on the knowledge she constructed from prior cross-cultural experiences and moved about the club with a watchful and respectful approach.

Spending time in the youth club provided Jorane with the opportunity to experience diversity from an unfamiliar perspective. And although she was already skilled at approaching others in culturally sensitive ways, Jorane came away from this experience with an appreciation for the importance of "just being a little bit more careful in terms of how to socialize with [Aboriginal youth]" (Individual conversation, Nov. 3, 2004).

> I think just having the experience is, I'm sort of walking in their territory. You know and trying to make my way through and trying to understand a little bit. So then I know how to act with them when they act with me. (Individual conversation, Nov. 3, 2004)

Reconsidering Herself in Relation to Diversity

By participating in the service learning project and engaging in conversations around it, Jorane also came to a better understanding of the nature of her attraction to issues of diversity. At the beginning of the project, she described how she was drawn, as a child, to the sights and sounds of other cultures. Towards the end, she was able to articulate that what attracted her was the nature of the interaction and quality of community life she experienced in other cultures.

> It's obvious that I'm definitely attracted to people from other cultures or countries but I think a lot of it has to do with the way they live. Maybe the community life or the kind of interaction they have…because I think that's more what I'm attracted to rather than the actual skin colour or whatever. You know it probably looks like I don't like my culture…But I think it has to do more with the interactions with the people that I like from other countries. They're just a little

> bit more approachable in a way. So I think that's where my attraction comes because here I think we live in a society where we're very alienated from each other. And we don't accept each other so easily. I remember a certain experience that happened when I was in Grade 2 in the American School in Saudi. I was standing in line in the library and I approached an American girl. I was excited to share that we had the same name and she responded by saying "so what?" I was crushed. I think maybe because of that experience, I'm always careful when I approach people. But you know it's true some days I'll be talking to people and the next day, I'm saying hello but they act like strangers. That kind of indifference makes me feel like I'm not sure how to act, so I don't act in a natural way. So then for me sometimes, I might look shy or reserved and I think it's more because of those kinds of interactions. So it's the fear of the interaction of the other person…whereas I don't feel that in other places or with other cultures. (Individual conversation, Nov. 3, 2004)

The quality of the interaction among participants was what drew Jorane to the Peña evenings as a teenager. Today, she is still more comfortable socializing with peers outside the mainstream.

> But it's amazing because I really can't connect with people…I connect a bit more with Francophones and actually, I connect the best with Africans. I feel the most comfortable with them…because they're more social and easier to socialize with. And also, maybe more of a variety of topics comes up. Because seriously, when I'm with other people, I don't like discussing about fashion or menial little

> things…I like to talk about all sorts of things and pop culture is very restricted. It's not real. (Individual conversation, May 22, 2005)

Jorane preferred to engage with people whose interests lay outside mainstream pop culture.

> I'm a total outcast, well outcast from the mainstream I guess…that's what I feel, even if I don't choose it. I feel it. I just kind of went here. And I'm thinking it could be because of all the genes, could also be that my experience in Saudi Arabia kind of made me interested in a lot of other things too. Because I think I look for where there's passion in life and that's where I find it. I don't find it here necessarily. But I find it elsewhere. (Individual conversation, Oct. 30, 2004)

Passion was a quality she found lacking in mainstream North American society which she described as "cold and reserved" and in which "[people] are alienated from each other" (Individual conversation Nov 3, 2004). This was why she had felt the need to go find passion in cultures from *elsewhere*. Jorane's reference to the "[family] genes" called forward her grandfather's as well as her father's experiences. I wondered whether in doing so, Jorane was demonstrating an awareness that she was following in their footsteps, living out a family story of doing one's own thing with passion for a good purpose. On the strength of their principles, her grandfather moved his family across the country and her father sacrificed his job in Saudi Arabia. Jorane was also committed to her principles but she discovered as a young adult that they did not seem to fit in well with mainstream society. I saw her come to terms with the disconnect by making a choice to live her life on the margins. From there, she found a way to live a meaningful life according to her principles and to remain connected to the passion she spoke of.

Late into the project, Jorane shared a few more stories that helped me understand what she meant by saying she found passion “elsewhere.” During our final interview, she related that while she and her husband were in university, her mother-in-law was injured in a car accident in South America. She had no medical insurance, so to help cover the cost of her treatment, Jorane and her husband took on temporary jobs picking strawberries in Quebec. Working alongside immigrant labourers, she and her husband earned very little but the experience opened her eyes to the spirit of community among these hard-working people and to the real story behind the little strawberry baskets she had always taken for granted in supermarkets.

> We were the only Caucasian people there. Everybody else was from Africa or from Haiti or from other countries. It’s hard work. You pick by hand so I learned to appreciate how much hard work is involved in picking the strawberries you buy in the store. I think the first couple of times we went we were making four bucks an hour and the speediest workers were able to make eight bucks an hour. If you’re doing it at eight bucks an hour you’re working like Superman. I sort of understood the cost value of these things and the work aspects involved in it too. (Individual conversation, Oct. 30, 2004)

Later, when they lived in Boston, Jorane and her husband were forced to take an extra job in order to contribute funds for another family medical emergency. This time, it was a job that took them downtown at three o’clock in the morning to bag and deliver newspapers.

Again, Jorane worked alongside people who impressed her with their work ethic, community spirit, and positive attitude.

> I found it so amazing that [my husband] and I were probably the most grumpy people there. Those people that would go at three o'clock in the morning to bag the newspapers were so happy and just very sociable…and they make a negative situation a positive one so that was an eye opener for me. (Individual conversation, Oct. 30, 2004)

It was the quality of the interaction she observed among her strawberry-picking and newspaper-bagging workmates that caught her attention. Despite their hardships, they came together as a community with a common sense of purpose, a positive attitude, and an interest in each other. This was the quality she had so far been unable to find in mainstream society, and spending time with these friendly, positive people "alleviated the negative situation [my husband and I] were in" (Individual conversation, May 22, 2005).

> There were no barriers in communication. Being around these humble people made me feel happy, gave me a sense of warmth. You could sense the realness, the openness, and the closeness of these people. Refugees and immigrants are passionate people who have energy and vision to make things work. They were thankful for the job, hard working, and open to interacting with others. (Individual conversation, May 22, 2005)

I understood then what Jorane meant when she spoke of finding passion in the margins. It was the *realness, openness, and closeness* she discovered among the immigrant workers that kept her interested in interacting with people of other cultures. I was reminded of the way she appreciated the humanity and community in her husband's overcrowded family home in South America. These environments provided the kind of atmosphere in which Jorane felt at home and explained why today she continues to be more comfortable interacting with people of other cultures who, like her, found their own sense of belonging outside the mainstream.

Reconsidering Herself in Relation to Teaching for Diversity

Jorane also learned a few things about herself in relation to how she might live as a teacher. On the one hand, her service learning experience confirmed the extent to which she was already attentive and culturally responsive to others. She demonstrated that when faced with an unfamiliar situation, she could bring an attitude of wonder and puzzlement as she inquired into how differences were lived out in the youth club environment. I felt all of these were admirable qualities that would serve her well as a teacher in meeting the challenge of diversity in classrooms. The service learning experience also called forward tensions that Jorane would have to address as a teacher. She recognized, for example, her tendency to take on too much. Easily drawn to new opportunities, she realized that trying to juggle full-time studies with after-school responsibilities both at the club and at home had been a strain.

> Sometimes I take on too many things at once and then I realize, oops. You know because everything seems so awesome in the beginning but once you get into all these things all at once, then you realize it's too much. (Individual conversation, Oct. 30, 2004)

The service learning experience helped Jorane gain the self-knowledge that she would have to strike a balance between her attraction to new opportunities and her ability to manage multiple commitments as a teacher, wife, and stepmother.

Jorane also recognized her need to take on a more active role when working with children. She had no difficulty with the liminality she encountered as she entered the club; living with uncertainty fit her natural tendency to adopt a "wait and see" attitude. She lived much of her life going to unfamiliar places where she did not know the story and grew accustomed to remaining somewhat detached, comfortably observing or assisting from the margins until she found something to connect with. But as one who would be soon be responsible for the education of large groups of children in a structured, outcomes-driven environment, Jorane recognized that she would have to shift her approach somewhat.

Finally, volunteering in the youth club helped Jorane appreciate how sensitive she was to the dynamic among the children she worked with, to the "positive vs. negative energy…the way kids act and talk to each other…you just close your eyes and feel how the energy is" (Individual conversation, Nov. 3, 2005). It was essential to her that children learn to come together as a community for good purposes. Given that she had chosen to teach adolescents, Jorane recognized that it would require a lot of effort on her part to engage the children in a way that would set the tone for the kind of atmosphere she wished for her future classroom. I sensed she was already putting these ideas into play, drawing on her self-knowledge to create a classroom community in which every child would feel a sense of belonging:

> In all my [Spanish] classes I try to make everybody feel comfortable with everybody. So if they have to go and talk in the front which is something that I feared as a child, I make everybody feel like it's a normal thing…up until now I haven't had the experience where people laugh at other people. (Individual conversation, Nov. 3, 2004)

I wondered how Jorane would be able to reconcile her desire to move forward for good purposes in her classroom with mainstream education's current focus on individualism and competitiveness. Would she find a way to honour her life-long commitment to goals of social responsibility and remain passionate about life in schools today? It has always been my experience that courage comes in the company of others and I hoped that Jorane would find a way to share her goals with her future colleagues in a way that would ensure a collective effort towards building community and social responsibility in schools.

The Journey

Looking back over the 4 months of service learning, I concluded that the Survivor game served as a turning point for Jorane. It seemed on that day, she moved in from the margins and took a public stand in a way I had not seen before. It was as if the activity reconnected her with her sense of purpose and commitment to social responsibility and helped her find her voice. Although this event took place towards the end of her time in the youth club and she ran out of time for the beautification ideas to be addressed, the conversations which evolved from it offered insight into the story Jorane was telling of herself as a teacher committed to doing her own thing for *good purposes* and creating a sense of community.

Reconnecting with her passion seemed also to bring back memories of earlier moments where she felt a sense of community with others, such as the time she had spent strawberry picking with immigrants or newspaper bagging with inner-city workers. These stories had not been part of the initial autobiographical conversation. I wondered then if Jorane's service learning experience had perhaps triggered restorying of herself and of some of the prior experiences that shaped who she was becoming. It was as if remembering these moments was helping her make sense of her community-oriented values to understand why she felt so strongly about their importance.

Working with Jorane helped me think more deeply as well about the importance of maintaining sustained conversation, both in groups and one-on-one with my participants. Although Jorane was a regular participant in site-specific and cross-site group conversations, I sensed she was not always comfortable sharing her stories. She was much more forthcoming in one-on-one conversations, during which she shared more of her struggle to compose a life as a student, part-time Spanish teacher, wife and stepmother. I learned, for example, that throughout the service learning, she also tried to make sense of her experiences through conversations with her husband who was, himself, experiencing challenging students in his own teaching.

> But it's a combination of my experience in the research site and my conversations with other people too and how they react. Like with [my husband] for example, he's experiencing teaching in an environment that's very difficult too…Some of

> my exchanges with [him] have helped me understand. (Individual conversation, Nov. 3, 2004)

Jorane's experiences made me appreciate the importance of providing varied dialogic opportunities during the service learning project. Her lived reality was different from that of the other participants. A one-on-one approach was required for Jorane to become comfortable enough to share her vulnerabilities and articulate how she was making sense of her service learning experience.

CHAPTER 7: AURORA'S STORIES TO LIVE BY

Stories Told

"Who I am is about family" were the words Aurora chose to describe herself as we sat together for our first autobiographical conversation. As she pulled out a photograph of her large extended family, she spoke of the sense of family tradition she developed as the granddaughter of a pioneering immigrant woman and daughter of a man who believed strongly in the value of family. She smiled as she described how she experienced the large gatherings that were held with regularity.

> I was social and I've always been very social…coming from a large family that had huge family functions that included all my first and second cousins. Some were strangers to me but they were good friends of my dad and so for me, at a young age, I got used to being introduced to many people…and being the first female grandchild and quite adorable, I was introduced quite a bit. (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004)

On the photograph, Aurora pointed out several members of her extended family who were teachers. As a child, she imagined following in their footsteps but that idea never became a life-long goal. "I used to want to be a teacher and all my aunts and uncles are teachers…I wouldn't say I had a childhood dream or profession other than working with kids, I guess" (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004). Eventually, she settled on becoming a teacher but only after first considering several other possibilities. It was to these career options that I traced the narrative threads of Aurora's stories to live by.

Curiosity About Others

> I find people fascinating. If I could have done cultural anthropology and actually had a job, I would have definitely gone into that field. (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004)

Aurora grew up in a predominantly White, middle-to upper-class community she described as "pretty snobby" (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004). Although she spoke of her mixed ethnicity, she considered herself to be part of the dominant culture.

> I'm a mix…I'm Polish, Ukrainian and I'm Scottish but if you look at me, I'm white. No, I don't have an ethnic look. I don't have the blond hair for people to say "Oh, she's Polish, or, maybe Ukrainian," or "She has freckles, maybe she's Scottish." I don't get a lot of that stuff. But I have friends who do get lumped into an ethnic group with one look, one who's Muslim, she's Lebanese and, there's differences and I know that I've never grown up experiencing that kind of stuff. (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 1, 2004)

Having noticed other ways of being and living from an early age, Aurora explained that she was always drawn to people who were different. She seemed aware that she had grown up "naïve" about them, that there was much she didn't know because of the homogeneity and privilege of her "white…roots" (Site-specific group conversation, March 14, 2004). I wondered how she reached that conclusion; diversity was not evident in the demographics of her schools, even the large public high school she attended in her community.

> We had two Jewish kids…and one Chinese guy and I didn't know that we were all white, you just wouldn't think. I didn't notice any difference. I didn't notice that there were no African-Americans. I didn't realize. [Our school] was very white, very very. (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004)

Issues of diversity did, however, come up with some regularity around the family supper table and this is where Aurora believes her interest in people of other cultural or social origins took root. It was there, for example, that the issue of cultural stereotypes first came up.

> I remember one car ride with my parents; we were discussing Natives downtown being poor and drunk. And I don't know how it came up and I started asking questions. Something I've done forever; I'm a question asker. And I don't know, someone had said around me something like "drunk Indian" or something to that extent and I was just talking to my parents about it and mom was explaining why it's a stereotype. We talked about stereotypes of cultures and why it was, where it came from, how some of it is true but it doesn't mean it's true for everybody. I guess my parents really taught tolerance more than I think they had sometimes but as a parent, that's what you do.…There was a lot of empathy taught there. They'd often ask: "If you were in that position, how would you feel?" (Individual conversation, Oct. 15, 2004)

The issue of gay rights also came up around the struggles of one of her parents' colleagues at work and, following high school, Aurora experienced her friend coming out of the closet. Aurora's interest in differences continued during university; she dabbled, for example, in courses about various religions, curious to learn how different religious practices came about.

> I just found it interesting the different faiths people have, why they believe in it. We had in [our school] two Jewish kids so they did not eat pork. I found it interesting that [they] didn't eat pork and had a Bar and Bat Mitzvah. Why? Why would your God say you can't eat pork? Where does this come from?…I have a friend who is Muslim and we get into conversations because of how the media portrays Muslims and what the true Muslim tradition is and what Muslim countries have done to their women is quite different. Just finding out about that stuff is interesting. (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004)

Her current religious interests were diverse: "I'm Agnostic and I've done some Buddhism, I like Shambala and Catholicism quite a bit but there's a lot of things with the Catholic church, the organized part, that they've done that I just don't agree with" (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004). Aurora was also interested in women's issues; she worked part-time for a women's rights organization and volunteered extensively recruiting new members for her women's fraternity. During the time she spent in the research site, Aurora was taking a course on witchcraft that explored a sect of the feminist movement. This course seemed to combine her interest in world religions and women's issues. Always curious about cultural and social differences, Aurora looked forward to the opportunity the service learning project offered of working with children whose backgrounds were different from her own.

Challenging Conventions

> I don't know where the lack of intimidation comes from. I've always been like that…it's been a constant since I was a child. (Site-specific group conversation, March 14, 2004)

Another career Aurora considered was psychiatry. Not only was she drawn to students in her school who were different, she also had a need to understand the story behind their difference. The differences that intrigued her did not necessarily involve race or ethnicity. Often, she was drawn by a student's allegiance to a social group which was represented through his or her manner of dress and behaviour. She recalled that during high school, there were distinct social groups that included *Academics*, *Jocks*, *Preppies*, *Skaters*, and *Goths*. Identifying herself first as a Skater and later a Preppy, she remembered being particularly drawn to the Goths. She was determined to understand why they dressed and behaved the way they did, and satisfying her curiosity often meant challenging prevailing social conventions. Aurora recalled feeling no reservation whatsoever about leaving her own peer group behind to approach the Goths and engage them in conversation.

> I was very preppy-looking walking down the street with all these Goths…they have different life experiences. Just because they're dressed a certain way to me it doesn't mean that we don't have things in common, we can't have a conversation. So it was almost like "Oh, why can't I talk to them?" So I did…even back then, I understood that a lot of people would judge you on the way you look and I disagree with that and would rather find out who's behind that stereotype. And I

> was interested: “Why are you Gothic? Why? What makes you this? Why do you feel you have to dress this way? Is it typical? Are you really interested in death and all this or is that just the stereotype?” So I didn’t do drugs but they had interesting drug stories so I could experience their stories without ever having to do them. (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004)

I could never imagine myself at that age, approaching a group of Goths, let alone asking such personal questions. Aurora, on the other hand, seemed to have no qualms about breaking the rules of teenage social convention to learn their life story. I learned this was not the only time she had broken with convention at school.

> Socially I was part of the elementary cool kids who were kind of mean to anybody who wasn’t in their clique and my parents, I think, were aware of this because I remember them asking about my friends or actions and talking a lot about empathy, “How would you feel if that had happened to you?” And at the end of Grade 5, beginning of Grade 6, a best friend in the clique and I had decided that we don’t want to be friends with these people. So it was monumental. We ditched the cool people and we told them to get out of our lives because what they were doing was wrong. And, Grade 6 was a hard year for me because of that, because you know “who leaves our group?” So then we joined the kind of smart kids, I wouldn’t say the nerdy ones, not the computer game ones, but the ones who got good marks and read books and were involved in sports and slumber parties. So we were with them in the middle ground, not losers but not the cool ones either. (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004)

Concerned about her "cool" clique's exclusivity, Aurora chose to leave it. In a similar way, upon finishing high school, she chose to explore life beyond her own comfortable community by moving to a large urban centre a few hundred miles away to work in its inner city. "I had decided to move…after I graduated so I was leaving everybody and everything I've ever known behind. I was basically in the same house all my life, same school all my life, same group of kids" (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004). In this new setting, she came into contact with many different cultures. For the first time, she was exposed to racism, which until then had been something she had only experienced from a distance, through discussions with her parents. She remembered, at 18 years of age, setting out to understand what racism was all about.

> It was so different from the community I grew up in so I didn't know any better not to [approach people]. Why shouldn't I?…I was sitting at a bus stop and it was like my natural friendly nature. There was a Muslim girl from Africa; I didn't know her at the time but we were both waiting for the bus. We just sat down and I'm like, "Hey, how's it going?" And I started talking to her, where she's from and her culture and if she gets, you know, racism. I don't know (laughter), pretty deep conversation right off the bat, I'm pretty sure. I was just curious but you know I didn't really [know any better]…I guess you're raised basically not to bring up that kind of stuff, like if I was in Toronto or if I was in a school that had a lot of difference, then I would have known about segregation, that it was more appropriate really not to get involved in these kinds of conversations. But since I was not raised there and that in my school, we didn't treat the Chinese guy or the

> couple of minorities any differently in the classroom, I just didn't know any better that maybe you wouldn't bring up this stuff. But at the same time, I'm totally fascinated with racism because I've never experienced it. (Individual conversation, Oct. 15, 2004)

This large urban setting also exposed Aurora to the harsh realities of inner-city life, from which she had been sheltered all her life; she had never seen poor or homeless people in her home community.

> Seeing drunk people stumbling around downtown. There's a lot of Natives with problems especially. I don't know, it was just seeing another side of life. It was all new experiences in that sense. (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004)

She told me of a time she had seen a "bum in the dumpster" behind her place of work. Uncertain what to do in this situation, she sought the advice of her boss who, she recalled, found her level of concern somewhat amusing.

> I didn't know how to react. I wasn't particularly scared but should I have been? You know it was new to me so I didn't know really how to act and what to do so I went inside and asked my boss. She laughed and thought it was hilarious. And it was a story I'm sure she is still telling now: "There's a bum in the dumpster, what are we going to do?" Because she thought it was very cute that I was that naïve and did not know how to deal with a situation such as that. (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004)

Aurora felt the man's condition required some action to be taken. Her boss' reaction, however, opened her eyes to prevailing social conventions which seemed to consider the presence of "bums" near dumpsters an event unworthy of special attention or specific action. This remained a memorable incident for Aurora because she felt it highlighted how naïve she was about urban street life.

> It scared me because I wasn't used to it; I grew up in a place that was white and had no street people, right? It really bothered me. I thought, "Oh my goodness, this is what people are talking about"…whereas before I was like "Oh you guys what are you talking about?" because I came from a place where we didn't have it so why would I think about it? (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 1, 2004)

As a young adult, Aurora's interest in social and cultural differences remained an important part of who she was becoming; she was sensitive to racist remarks and often challenged convention by speaking out for minorities to be treated with respect.

> I don't appreciate or put up with people telling racist jokes of any kind and if they do get told in front of me, I speak up and I say "That's inappropriate and why would you have to say what this person's ethnicity is, why would that change the joke? Does it make it any better?" So people usually change how they act around me or they don't come around me and I think that's the best way to deal with things. If you take everything personally, you just have to act how you want people to act. (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004)

During a cross-site group conversation, I had the opportunity to observe Aurora challenge another research participant who shared her opinion that federal employment guidelines in respect of minorities, specifically Aboriginal workers, was causing reverse discrimination and impacting her chances of finding summer employment. Aurora challenged her views.

> Do you know how the law came about? The Visible Minority Laws. It's like Affirmative Action in the States. I would suggest you go to HRDC websites and look into it. They're doing for minorities now what they did for women in the '80s. And protecting minorities has two sides to it and there's definitely the side where it's reverse discrimination. But minorities have been discriminated against for so long that we need to be able to bring them into the system and let them feel safe…Yeah, hit the website because the government says why they implemented it and how they were one of the first and they have huge documentation on why it's been implemented, the ramifications and everything. And still now only visible minorities can apply on certain jobs. Other jobs, it's open to everybody. But I'd check it out just for interest's sake so you know where you're coming from. (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 1, 2004)

Aurora was obviously familiar with the visible minority legislation and felt it important for the other participant to understand its purpose before speaking out against it. She went on to admit she could understand why people might take issue with what was being perceived as advantageous treatment of Aboriginal people: "Well Natives don't have to pay taxes or like there's a lot of stuff to be bitter over. Like how long are we going to be paying for them is a debate within myself" (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 1, 2004). I learned that this kind of intervention was common for Aurora, even when she was among her friends.

> The more you understand where people are coming from, the better you will be able to help. My friend says "Jewed." I noticed him do it a couple of times and you know, didn't really make a comment the first time. He did it again and I was just like "Wow, do you realize you're saying it? Like do you realize that you're spreading racism whether you mean to or not? Do you realize what that is and where it comes from? What the term means? Why it's racist? And why it's not just a word and in saying it you're propelling this racism?" I think you have a responsibility to understand where this comes from…So if you can change your outlook, you can create a rippling effect. Then maybe the 10 people that you've talked to agree with your view that by using racial slang, [racism] will be passed on. The five people who disagree with me will keep it up. But eventually maybe we can create change down the road. So in that sense, it's important for diversity. (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004)

I saw Aurora's intervention as an example of her living out her narrative thread of challenging convention and following through with "acting how you want people to act" (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004).

Seeing Herself as a 'Natural Leader'

> I have a tendency to take over and just do it all instead of letting someone grow into a leadership role because I have natural leadership skills that just come to me. (Individual conversation, July 7, 2004)

> With my group of friends, I was never the follower. I was always one of the leaders and I was always one of the people that all of the kids in my clique would come and talk to if they had a problem. I am the problem-solver, the life-skills person. (Individual conversation, July 4, 2004)

As one who saw herself as a "natural leader" as well as a problem-solver, it is not surprising that Aurora had also considered becoming a lawyer. She was convinced, however, that her love of children would steer her towards a practice in family or social work law and, as had been the case when she considered a career in psychiatry, she worried about becoming too emotionally involved with clients' problems.

I wondered what Aurora meant when she spoke of natural leadership. She mentioned being aware that once she entered a room, her presence did not go unnoticed. In fact, she told me it was not unusual for her to enter a store and be mistaken for a clerk by shoppers seeking assistance. "I can walk in anywhere and people just assume I work there. I guess it's just how I hold myself, or whatever, right?" (Individual conversation, July 4, 2004). Aurora seemed to move and carry herself with authority. She also felt that her voice had both a tone and a timbre that exuded authority. This was something she felt she had inherited from her father.

> I have the same voice as [my dad]. He just has this voice that you can hear it no matter where you are and I definitely have that. (Individual conversation, July 7, 2004)

Following in her father's footsteps, Aurora became involved in coaching children's sports teams; she had been very successful in that regard. In all the time she spent with children, either in a family setting or as coach, she had yet to have children not listen to her.

> Maybe my confidence comes from the fact that I haven't been shut down yet…I have complete confidence that [children will] listen…that comes from my coaching and family experiences…My presence and tone of voice are enough. (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 18, 2004)

In describing her "presence and tone of voice" as being "enough," Aurora seemed to be referring to a sort of embodied authority she exuded in the presence of children, which made her act in accordance to a way of being she had known all her life. Aurora had always occupied a position of leadership with children, beginning with her own cousins at family gatherings, and the hierarchical nature of these relationships had probably shaped the way she interacted with most children she met. I imagined this was what Aurora meant by saying she had natural leadership skills.

A second aspect of Aurora's natural leadership skills seemed to involve a belief in the importance of maintaining herself in a position of strength and not showing signs of weakness. I learned how this aspect played itself out at school where she described herself as very social, working only as hard as she needed to.

> Oh, I enjoyed learning; I was very much a fly student. I was not a studious student, I never learned any good study habits because I found I could sit in class and listen and I wouldn't really have to do much homework unless I had to hand it in. (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004)

When Aurora changed friendship circles in Grade 6, she found herself surrounded with intensely competitive honour roll students; she struggled to keep up with them and found it hard to feel successful. At 13 years of age, she jumped at the opportunity to become involved in volunteer work, which both provided a legitimate opportunity to "miss school" and opened up a whole new social setting (Site-specific group conversation, March 27, 2004).

> In junior high I started volunteer work because there was leadership-training…They came into the schools and you could miss school and I was all over that. I wouldn't have to go to school and I got to go to this camp…so they went over leadership skills, they did the group games, team building and all this stuff. And it was interesting. I met a lot of different people that way. And some of the skills I found I seemed to be really good at. It just came naturally that I was a leader; I was the person people talk to and when people didn't make decisions they usually turned to me in the group and I'd say: "OK well this weekend we're doing this you guys. Or why don't we watch movies over here?" So I usually took on that role without realizing. (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004)

She welcomed the relief volunteering provided from the stress of competing at school. "I could not concentrate on school unless the need in me is fulfilled to be doing something in the community. It's my social time; it's my fun time…that getting away from school and doing something that I like to do, you know, and school isn't something that you like to do. It's a means to an end" (Individual conversation, Oct. 15, 2004). Throughout high school, she remained heavily involved in volunteering through a community youth group.

> This leadership training that I had taken opened all these volunteer working experiences for me. In high school because my name was known, there was a list of us who had taken this training and we got together to form a community youth group so that youth could have a voice. The government had hired somebody to be a youth coordinator...They called me in, I brought a couple of my friends and I ended up being one of the founding members…We decided we needed a Board, an office board made up of six or eight adults and four youth. So at 16, I was hiring adults. (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004)

Aurora lent her voice in support of groups pursuing various civic and community projects; she felt this was how she learned to put what she considered her natural leadership skills to good use. I can only imagine how empowering it must have felt for her at 15 years of age to be involved in developing strategy plans for large-scale civic projects designed to benefit youth in the community; it no doubt gave her the sense of confidence she had been seeking at school.

Aurora continued her involvement in volunteering during university by heading up the recruitment initiative for her women's fraternity. While she continued to enjoy the feeling of confidence and success this brought, she recognized that her commitment to it had a way of taking up a great deal of her time. Although she was aware of her parents' concern that her many extracurricular responsibilities were interfering with her studies, she did not curb her involvement.

> I'm very busy but I don't think that has as much to do with being a student as how much I choose to be involved. Like yesterday, I volunteered at the food bank.

> They changed locations. So I think it's just what you're willing to put out. I have some friends that refuse to work or anything during the year and they just focus in on school. My mother wishes I would do that but I don't. But it fits fine for me as long as I can make it work around exams and papers. (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004)

One of Aurora's comments intrigued me and suggested that her involvement with volunteering might be providing something else too.

> It was something I had to get over where you get yourself so busy and so stressed out you're so scared that you might not succeed. If you put your all into it, then at least you have an excuse why you didn't. And that's very much what I am like and that's what I figured out years ago…and I think it stems back actually from Grade 3 when I was almost held back a year and I was scared but I pushed forward and I got through it. This is kind of where I think it comes from…I have a huge fear of failure which makes me not apply myself to my full potential; I know it's something that I've had to deal with and that I figured out about two years ago and I've been dealing with since. (Individual conversation, July 7, 2005)

I had a sense that in addition to providing a welcome diversion from school, a social outlet, and a sense of voice, Aurora's volunteering, to some degree, might also be serving as a pretext in the event she did not find the academic success she was seeking. Her words suggested that she had developed a habit of choosing to not apply herself completely at school for fear that if she put all her effort into school and failed, it would signal her inability to achieve the honours standing that many of her peer group achieved.

It seemed she carried this habit forward through high school and university. I wondered whether remaining heavily involved in extracurricular commitments might be providing a way for Aurora to rationalize her results should they not meet with her own expectations. Perhaps too, her role in volunteering provided a way to retain the position of authority or natural leadership she had always enjoyed and was having more difficulty maintaining in school. I imagined as she moved through her teens to young adulthood, she increasingly lived and told a story of being confident and comfortable with her leadership role in volunteering. I sensed from our conversations that her awareness of the authority she embodied had probably played a role in her final career choice. "This power—as soon as I enter the room. I'm OK with that because it's the reason I'm becoming a teacher" (Individual conversation, Oct. 19, 2004).

A Strong Sense of Responsibility

Aurora traced her natural leadership skills to a sense of responsibility she developed as a child, one she attributed in part to her gender and birth order and in part to her parents' influence. As the oldest female grandchild, she welcomed the responsibility of caring for her younger cousins during family gatherings and took it very seriously.

> Because of my huge family, I've always been surrounded by kids. I enjoy them. I love my little cousins and so I was always the one in charge of them because I was the oldest girl…The boys didn't really care and I enjoyed that so I didn't mind looking after the kids. Like when I was 6, I would go off with them and you

> know from then on, I was always with them. I was always holding babies; I knew tons about kids. (Individual conversation, March 2, 2005)

From a young age, Aurora enjoyed helping people outside her family as well, and her caretaking responsibilities carried over into her school life. She made friends easily and became the confidante of many.

Early on, her parents encouraged her to engage in conflict resolution, which Aurora felt contributed to nurturing a strong sense of responsibility. Part of this learning involved a commitment to using talk as a way to solve problems. She recalled, for example, how she and her brothers "were not allowed to touch each other; [settling disagreements] had to be done verbally and I knew that [my brothers] wouldn't touch me. Like if they did something, they would be in so much trouble…So I just stood my ground" (Site-specific group conversation, March 14, 2004).

> My parents brought me up that I had equal voice…I'd talk to my parents and they'd be like, "listen to this situation from an outsider's point of view"…That's what I was taught to do by my parents…problem-solving…And my parents were constantly talking to me. (Individual conversation, July 7, 2004)

As a child, she was also given choices and the opportunity to make her own decisions, including which religion she wished to practice.

> So there's two nuns in my grandma's family, my dad was raised very Catholic but [my parents] let us choose what our religion would be…From the beginning, they never made us go to church or anything. I got to choose. (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004)

Along with the opportunity to make her own decisions came the expectation that Aurora would be responsible for her choices, including those she made at school.

> I learned confidence and my parents very much supported me in challenging authority and not just accepting it. So if I came home and said, "You know my teacher did this, I can't stand this blah, blah, blah." Sometimes I would be in the wrong but my parents would still meet with the teacher and me to talk about the situation. I also went to every parent-teacher interview. So if the teacher had anything negative to say about me, they had to say it to me, and if I had anything to say or disagree with anything the teachers said, then I would speak up at the time…If I had a problem with my teacher, it wasn't my parents and the teacher dealing with it, it was all of us so that we could work as a group together. I think my parents just learned that at work, it's just something they brought home to the family and we did it as well. But I was more involved than either of my brothers. (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004)

Aurora shared one story as an example of how she learned to address problems by talking them through. She told of a disagreement she had with an upper elementary teacher who disciplined her for coming to class without her materials. In compliance with the teacher's request, Aurora sat apart from the other students during class and occupied herself writing the same word over and over on a lined sheet of paper. At one point, the teacher stopped teaching and came over to see what she was doing. Aurora recalled hearing him say, "Oh isn't this productive" before going on to read aloud to the class what was written on her paper. Embarrassed and outraged by the teacher's actions, Aurora approached him after class to express her displeasure.

> I thought it was completely inappropriate…So my parents always taught me to try and confront the situation first; if the teacher or whoever at the time would not listen to me, they would come and back me up. So after class I went and talked to him and I'm like, "What you did was rude. If you have a problem with what I'm doing then I prefer that you take me out of class and talk to me one-on-one. Why would you have to do that in front of the whole class you know that's really upsetting." (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004)

As I heard her tell this story, I couldn't help but wonder how many students her age would have taken their teacher to task in this manner. Evidently, her parents had nurtured a strong sense of responsibility that Aurora took very seriously.

> Sometimes I think I get so caught up in the who, what and the whys and I think about the situation to be responsible, like even when I go out drinking and get somewhat inebriated I'm always responsible. "Is everybody looked after, is everybody going home together?"…I've always been this way. I've been more responsible and I'm never just fun loving. Because of this, I can't be carefree. (Individual conversation, Oct. 15, 2004)

Aurora wished at times she could find balance as a young adult between her sense of responsibility and her sense of fun.

Aurora's sense of responsibility seemed also to be connected to a need for control over her environment. She explained that whenever she sensed chaos, she felt the need to restore order. And when those in charge seemed to lack decisiveness to do so, she would take on the responsibility of stepping in to restore order herself. I had the opportunity to witness such an intervention when Aurora, Jorane, and I gathered the children one evening in the research site kitchen for our Cooking Club activity. When the time came to split the children into three cooking groups, I turned to Aurora and Jorane to see how they might like to proceed. As the three of us conferred, the noise level in the room increased and children began touching ingredients and tousling with each other. Within seconds and without warning, Aurora took matters into her own hands. In a commanding voice, she instructed Jorane to move to one corner of the room, me to another and announced she would stand in a third corner. She then gave the children 30 seconds to make their way to one of the three groups.

As we sat together at the end of the evening, Aurora apologized for having taken over the group selection process. I found it interesting that she felt the need to apologize; I felt this gesture signalled her awareness of a strong need for control of her environment and a tendency to take over from others when she felt the need to restore it.

> It was brought to my attention or through noticing or someone talking to me, I'm not sure. Just that I have this tendency to take over a bit when I'm in with people and just naturally want to jump into the role and deal with everybody…I think I'm more aware of how I act…I have a tendency to take over and just do it all instead of letting someone grow into a leadership role because I have natural leadership skills that just come to me. (Individual conversation, July 7, 2004)

Her reference to "letting someone grow into a leadership role" brought forward how when she was involved in collaborative ventures, she often took charge over others. She mentioned that even her closest friends sometimes found her intimidating. While she was cognizant of this difficulty, she was quick to point out that although she felt it was important to behave in such a way as to maintain authority over children and earn their respect, she did not consider her approach intimidating.

> I think there's a difference, like I'm not saying you have to intimidate children but you can't be intimidated by them. And I think that's a big difference. (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 18, 2004)

She attributed this difficulty to her tendency to "want to know everything about a situation and wanting to deal with it myself" (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004). Even in her women's fraternity, she spoke of an awareness that "sometimes I think I just take over because I get frustrated that things don't get done fast enough and I have to stop that in working with people" (Site-specific group conversation, March 14, 2005). Having a strong voice and maintaining control of her environment were certainly important parts of who Aurora had become and she struggled with the uncertainty of negotiating the right balance between sharing leadership with others and feeling responsible for re-establishing order and control to her environment when she felt it necessary. I was excited thinking about how this tension would play out as she worked collaboratively in the service learning site.

Stories Interrupted in the Borderland

Entering an Unfamiliar Space

Given the narrative threads in her stories to live by, it was not surprising that Aurora came forward to participate in a service learning project. Here was an opportunity to learn about differences and see more of life beyond her white middle-class world. And Aurora was no stranger to involvement with youth in the community.

When she first entered the youth club, Aurora felt at ease with the age range of the children: "Having so many diverse age groups doesn't bother me at all because I have that at Christmas time; we've always had it around" (Site-specific group conversation, March 14, 2004). What she was less comfortable with, however, was finding herself in an environment where she did not know the rules. As a drop-in youth center, the club provided a space where the children were largely free to come and go throughout the afternoon and early evening. Their frequent movement through the various rooms and activities as well as in and out of the club made it difficult for Aurora to feel in control of her environment. Even when children signed up for activities, as was the case for our cooking club, it was not unusual for them to have gone home or changed their mind by the time the activity got underway. In such an unpredictable environment, Aurora was dispositioned out of her comfort zone.

> I totally felt uncomfortable because I didn't know what to do with this one, what the consequences of discipline were and it's like walking into a babysitting job and the parents leave and you don't know if the kids are allowed snacks and if they're not. So I was totally confused. So I started talking to all the co-

> workers…"What's allowed? What can we do? What can't we do?" (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 1, 2004)

This lack of knowledge made it difficult for her to assume a familiar position of authority in the presence of children. Aurora quickly sought help from staff members: "When I'm uncomfortable, the first thing I do is start asking questions. What are the rules?" (Site-specific group conversation, March 14, 2004). She found them quite open to her inquiries, which, I observed, often turned into lengthy conversations. It seemed very important to Aurora to know where she stood in the club. "What's my role? What are kids allowed to do?" She did not, however, find the feedback she received very reassuring:

> Basically, what [the staff member] told me drove me nuts because I'm very black and white when it comes to rules but every single one of [the staff members] reacts differently and it doesn't matter. They don't have a set rule system. (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 18, 2004)

As I observed Aurora through the early weeks in the youth club, I noticed that she spent far more time with staff members than with individual children. I wondered if, given her prior experiences with children, she felt she might already know what she needed to know about them. For her, kids, after all, were kids. Her attention seemed more focused on finding out how the club worked, what the rules were, and what was expected of the children while they were there. She did take interest in individual children, inquiring about their behavioural history within the club; knowing their club "story" seemed an important step for Aurora to feel comfortable. She recognized that interacting more with staff than with youth club children made her approach different from Jorane's or mine but it was her way of adapting to a new setting. One day, she described what she observed of our respective interactions up to that point in the youth club.

> I have a hard time jumping in and playing pool but both you and Jorane will play pool and foosball where I'll go and talk to the staff member and be like "OK, explain to me what's going on with this kid. Who's doing this? What are these guys' names again?" Whereas you guys are more "let's get to know them more individually." I'll gradually do that but I, I want to kind of know how we're supposed to interact with the kids in the club. (Site-specific group conversation, March 14, 2004)

Encountering Unexpected Stories of Herself

Aurora's initial unease with the lack of structure in the youth club was not evident in her demeanour. With outward confidence, she went about providing assistance where it was needed. As a volunteer, she had been given an identification badge she was expected to wear at all times in the youth club. She did not, however, feel the badge was necessary to represent her position of authority.

> See I think I just approach it differently because I haven't worn my badge once in there and I just have that voice. I've been walking my dogs through a park and seen kids vandalizing equipment and I'll stop. I'll give them crap and say stop and they do. I've never had a kid not listen when I say something. I'll have them lip off a bit but I just stand there and look at them and they'll listen. Like it's really

> rare for someone to actually just not listen. (Site-specific group conversation, March 14, 2004)

Nor did Aurora feel the need to admit to the children that as a volunteer, she did not have the authority to carry the keys that provided access to the kitchen and other club rooms. Aurora often carried her own large key ring on her belt loop and when children asked her to unlock a room, she typically redirected them to a staff member, claiming to be too busy or otherwise engaged.

> I never tell the kids I don't have keys and the thing is they see me on and off with my other keys, they assume I have keys…I didn't realize I was really doing that, but part of me keeping my authority was saying "I'm busy right now, you have to go and find [another staff member]." (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 1, 2004)

Carrying keys was a recognized sign of authority and it seemed to be very important to Aurora that she be perceived by the children as having as much authority as the paid staff members. I learned that her response to the children was a deliberate strategy used to maintain authority in their eyes.

Aurora paid close attention to the way staff members interacted with the children. Two of them, Dolores and Kendra, caught her interest because of what she considered were contrasting styles of interaction.

> I find Dolores knows where it's at. She is straightforward and direct with the kids. She prides herself on demanding respect from the children and incorporating fear to get them to listen whereas Kendra is more chilled out but she gets the respect.

> As soon as something's wrong, she just says, "You don't do that" and the kids listen. (Site-specific group conversation, March 14, 2004)

Despite their differences, Aurora initially considered both Dolores' and Kendra's styles effective in getting the children to listen. A few weeks later, however, she began to take issue with Dolores' ways.

> If they're misbehaving, Dolores will make them clean no matter what; if she doesn't like a word you said, she doesn't like what you were doing, no matter what extreme, you're either mopping the floor or cleaning the bathroom. She has a chore for the rule breaking you do whereas Kendra is more laid back. If she hears inappropriate language, she'll just raise her eyebrow and be like, "Oh, pardon me" and the kid will apologize. And I fit more in with Kendra. (Cross-site group conversation, Apr. 1, 2004)

From that point on, Aurora began to story herself as similar to Kendra in dealing with the youth club children. In the ensuing weeks, Dolores left the club to work elsewhere. Aurora was shocked one day when another staff member remarked how much her style reminded him of Dolores.

> [Another staff member] called me the alpha female and he's like, "You've just taken over Dolores' role." That's the second comment I've gotten about Dolores…basically he felt that I was like, I'm taking charge and I had…control of all the kids. (Site-specific group conversation, May 27, 2004)

The first of the two comments Aurora was referring to had come a few days earlier when another staff member told her that her way of organizing the children for preparation and clean-up of dinner reminded her of Dolores. Aurora was not pleased. The "comments that I'm similar to [Dolores]…that totally just bothers me because it means I'm being harsh…I'm trying to talk it out and be laid back like Kendra" (Individual conversation, June 19, 2004). She was even more dismayed when Kendra confirmed that she saw little similarity between her style and Aurora's.

> Kendra thinks I'm doing well but she thinks we have completely different styles, which I don't get. She doesn't disagree with my way but she feels it's not her way. I think she thinks I'm too strict in one way or another. And I am a bit. This is my own assumption though. I'm not positive, but I sometimes feel that's what she thinks. (Individual conversation, August 5, 2004)

Taken together, these comments prompted Aurora to stop and reflect on how she was being seen by others in the club. Throughout her time in the service learning placement, she storied herself as similar to Kendra yet was now learning that she was being storied by others as far more similar to Dolores. This dispositioned Aurora into reconsidering her approach to working with these children.

> Dolores always kicked everybody out. And that's what I told Kendra. "Kendra, I'm scared." I don't want to end up like Dolores. I don't want to end up with these kids hating me. (Site-specific group conversation, May 27, 2004)

As far as Aurora was concerned, there could be no worse outcome than to lose not only the respect, but also the affection of children. This certainly did not fit her story of having always been loved and/or respected by children she babysat and coached. She concluded she would have to make changes to her way of living and being in the club if she was going to reconcile who she wanted to be with who she had become in the eyes of others.

Encountering Others Challenging Convention

One evening, as we prepared for our cooking club activity, Aurora related to Jorane and me how moments earlier, she had confronted a gang[14] of approximately 20 youths as they attempted to enter the club to shake down a club member they suspected of stealing a bicycle. Aurora met them at the door and, although two other club staff members quickly joined her there, she single-handedly prevented the group from entering the club. I returned to my field notes to remember the incident.

> Aurora described them as 18-year-old high school students. She stopped them at the entrance saying something like "What do you think you're doing? Get out!" One youth tried to step past her. Aurora put her arm out to block access and screamed at them "All of you get out now!" She followed them outside and told them to get off the property. (Claire's field notes, Apr. 23, 2004)

Aurora had taken a huge risk in confronting the group of youths and I was both amazed and alarmed at her lack of intimidation. I was reminded, however, of Aurora telling me about the times she stood up to her brothers, both of whom were much taller and heavier than she. She had complete confidence that no matter how angry they became, her brothers would not raise a fist to her. She had no such assurance with these youths and I couldn't help but shudder as I thought of what might have happened had one of them chosen to retaliate.

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[14] I refer to the group of youths as a "gang" in accordance with the way they were referred to by youth club members.

A few weeks later, Aurora confronted another youth in a similar way. This time, the outcome was not what she had anticipated. Through the club windows, she observed the youth playing with a hockey stick; moments later, he found an aerosol can and was attempting to spray another boy with it. Stepping outside, she approached the youth and asked him to hand the can to her. He refused and tossed it on the ground. Aurora twice asked him to pick it up but he refused to comply. After an unsuccessful third attempt, she responded: "OK. I'm going to have to call the police on you" and walked back inside the club. I was playing pool in the main room at the time, and just as Aurora entered the club, we all heard a loud crashing sound. Word spread quickly that a large double-paned window on the side of the club had been shattered.

Upon hearing witnesses report that they had seen a youth wielding a hockey stick flee the premises, Aurora went to relate her earlier exchange to the club director. From her, she learned that the boy was indeed known to the staff and had been recently reinstated after being kicked out of the club a year before. As we gathered at the window to clean up the shards of glass, I overhead Kendra gently explain to Aurora that "You know, these things happen but we wouldn't threaten to call the police because with these kids, things can escalate" (Claire's field notes, May 13, 2004).

Later, as she reflected on the hockey stick incident, Aurora recognized that her intervention precipitated the boy's angry reaction.

> He got mad because I told him I'd call the cops on him and that's what made him throw the hockey stick at the window…I was more disappointed in myself because it was like I was put between a rock and a hard place. I didn't know what to do so that's what I decided to say. And I knew it wasn't exactly the right thing to do but it was me not showing weakness. So that's why I was kind of mad and I thought "I really need to work on my communication…I really feel that I'm lacking in communication skills." Like I feel like I don't know how to talk to these kids. I'm trying really hard and I don't want to resort to the fact that I can't talk to them so I'm kicking them out instead, you know so I'm trying, that's why I don't want to kick them out all of the time. (Individual conversation, June 19, 2004)

Aurora also recognized that her reaction "wasn't exactly the right thing to do." But having never experienced not being able to talk to kids before, she did not know how to react. She went back to a familiar script of "not showing weakness" and being in control. This was a story she knew well. She felt it was important to maintain her position of authority over the boy by challenging his defiance. It was clear she had not expected the boy's reaction. She had never experienced defiance in her prior experiences with younger children in her extended family or in the teams she coached.

> It's completely shocking for me. It's brand new for me. Communicating with my cousins where I have authority, where I have power, where I already have the respect, right? With these kids, it's different. Like I can sit down with my cousin…who gets picked on…He gets so mad he doesn't know what to do out of

> frustration. Well we can sit down on the step and talk for half an hour while I'm babysitting and work it all out. But I know his family history. I know what's going on. I've changed his diapers and I've known him for 10 years, you know. So I can communicate with him. But with these kids, I can't and it's so frustrating. (Individual conversation, June 19, 2004)

She was expressing an awareness that her success in communicating with younger family members rested on a shared family history, on the basis of which she was able to anticipate their reactions. A common history was something she did not share with this youth; the boy was no more familiar with the story she told of herself than she was with the story he told of himself, hence their inability to communicate effectively. This was a very unfamiliar feeling for Aurora and ran counter to the story she told of herself as someone who knew all about children and had always been successful resolving conflicts with words. Aurora was now questioning her communication skills and waking up to a very different story of herself in the context of this community and these children.

Encountering the Complexity of Exercising Leadership

Aurora's time in the club also caused her to reconsider what she described as her black and white approach to the interpretation and application of rules. The gang of youths Aurora confronted at the door of the club had been pursuing a boy named James; they claimed to have seen him wheel one of their bikes into the club. Following the incident, James, along with his girlfriend, Cathy, had been driven home as a safety precaution and the matter was referred to youth club staff. When we returned to the club the following week, we were surprised to see James in the club and were informed that senior staff members were still trying to assess whether he should be allowed to stay or be suspended. I, for one, felt concerned that the youths might again seek him out in the club. Recalling the narrative thread of curiosity in Aurora's story to live by, I was not surprised to see her approach James and his girlfriend as they sat in the youth club office to find out how events had unfolded since our last time in the club.

She learned that on the night of the incident, James had tried to contact an older brother to ask for protection from his pursuers. She also learned that his older brother had spent some time in jail and was suspected of being part of a gang. Club rules clearly stipulated that involvement, even suspected involvement, with a gang would result in expulsion. As she learned more about James' troubled life, Aurora began to reconsider the difficult decision faced by senior staff members.

> I got the impression that his brother's been in jail for potentially injuring someone violently. I don't think he killed anybody…and his brother may not have been in the gang but he was on the verge of being in the gang if he wasn't, so [James] has had quite a few negative influences. Since he started dating Cathy, he has made an about turn, has been nothing but improving but in the last few months, he's made a few slip-ups. So, because of this, this is [the club's] moral debate. He's been improving, he's been getting better; if we put him out on the street and don't allow him, what's the cost? By keeping him in the club are we costing the other children their safety versus by kicking him out of the club, are we costing him his life, his future. (Site-specific group conversation, May 2, 2004)

Aurora suspected that in addressing the issue, the director's point of view "would come from the safety point of the whole club" while the social worker's "would come from what's best for James" (Site-specific group conversation, May 2, 2004). The length of time it took for them to reach a decision helped Aurora begin to appreciate the risk of imposing club rules without consideration of life contexts; although in the short term, expulsion was the easier solution and strictly speaking, club rules recommended it, Aurora recognized that extenuating circumstances made this boy's case more complex. She was now aware of James' life outside the club and of his recent efforts to resist negative influences in his home environment. This knowledge made a hard and swift decision seem much less appropriate. She began to see how knowing children, really knowing children, had to begin with knowing each child's whole story, not just the one evidenced by their behaviour for a few hours each day at the club.

In addition to highlighting the complexity of adhering to club rules, the debate about James helped Aurora wake up to the difficulty of living by her own rules as well, one of which was to maintain children's respect by always holding herself above them. "I joked with James and Cathy and this is the first time I've actually done something like that because I do hold myself a little above the kids because I have a hard time, I'm scared to cross that boundary and lose respect, right?" (Site-specific group conversation, May 2, 2004). I found it interesting that the more time Aurora spent with James and Cathy, the more the boundary seem to blur between the part of her that wanted to maintain her authority and the part of her that was growing comfortable as a friend. She struggled as she tried to negotiate the uncertain boundary of their tentative relationship.

In the intimacy of the club office, Aurora let her guard down and allowed herself to be warm and humorous with James and Cathy, "fostering a bit of a relationship out of this gang situation" (Site-specific research conversation, May 2, 2004). Shortly thereafter, however, when Cathy attempted to return the teasing in the presence of other club members, Aurora's attitude changed. This was how she explained the internal discomfort that prompted and followed her reaction:

> It was interesting actually; I'm very big on instilling manners and this comes from babysitting a long time ago—gimme that, gimme that please. Can you pick that up? Can you pick that up…Please? And Cathy called me on it. Interesting enough I don't know if she realized she was calling me on it but she was on the couch and they had kicked off all the kids from the couch except for the staff members watching this Survivor game because there were fights over it. And I'm like "That's it. Everybody get off the couch. Ladies get off now." And [Cathy] said "Please" but I didn't get it. I thought she was saying "Please, can I stay on the couch," and I said, "No, get off the couch" and she's like "You can say please." It was interesting how I didn't respond to it, I just gave her a look, kind of almost attitudish but it hit home a lot but I couldn't let it show that it hit home right because that would ruin my position of authority, right? I was very upset with myself that I wasn't using my manners that I'm telling other people to use…It's very funny that I didn't because I should have and it probably would have made a better thing but I'm more like Dolores in that sense where you know I'll stick

> with what I said…My rules are rules. (Site-specific research conversation, May 2, 2004)

Aurora felt that publicly acknowledging Cathy's teasing about minding her own manners would have undermined her position of authority in the club. She could not "let it show" that Cathy's comment had "hit home" for it would be a sign of weakness. She worried that crossing the boundary between the professional and the personal would jeopardize the respect she felt she had earned and show weakness on her part as a leader. I understood then how important it was to Aurora to maintain her status of authority in the club, even more so than following up on an opportunity to nurture the relationship she was developing with James and Cathy. But it was only when she did cross the boundary over into the personal that she became aware of James' life outside the club. In other words, getting to know James on a personal level is what allowed her to connect with him. This was a dispositioning discovery for someone who had always "held herself above the children and refused to cross that boundary" for fear that getting too close would undermine her authority and be a sign of weakness. Aurora now understood that allowing herself to connect with James on a personal level was the only way to access his whole story and begin to establish a meaningful connection.

Stories Retold

Reconsidering Diversity

> When you start to know kids as kids and their lives, you don't just think in terms of groups, i.e., my school's social groups or the kids I coached. (Site-specific group conversation, May 27, 2004)

With these words, Aurora seemed to me to be telling a new story in relation to what she knew of diversity. Until that point, I had a sense that Aurora's interest in diversity mostly involved curiosity about categories of difference. As I read and re-read transcripts of our conversations both before and during the service learning, I sensed a contradiction in Aurora between her attraction to people based on their social or cultural differences and her efforts to break down stereotyping based on these differences. While I witnessed her take issue with others when they expressed stereotypic views, I also saw her draw on stereotypic assumptions to make sense of people. This tension became evident to me when she described a girl she recently befriended from her home community.

> I've become good friends with her…She's from [my community] though and I don't like a lot of people from [there]. It's interesting because out of [there] come two classes [of people]. The people who love it and are still friends like 10 years later with the same people from high school and then there's the ones who leave and they're like, "We're all snobs" right? And those people will get along fine who kind of hold [my community] in contempt. But you have to understand too, to grow up [there] and see it, like it's nowhere else can you see people who just

> think the way they do and you're still close to them but you're not really. I don't know, it's so confusing because it's almost like our own little society thing…even like the high schools. The first question out of your mouth when you meet someone else from [there] is "Which high school did you go to?" And that shows what kind of person you were [there]. (Individual conversation, June 19, 2004)

With these words, Aurora seemed to be suggesting that in her own community, one could know all there was to know about people based on the geographic location of their home or choice of schools. While, on the one hand, Aurora talked about the importance of breaking down stereotypes based on social and cultural differences, she also seemed to be using these same differences to make sense of the world around her. I recalled how earlier, she voiced her desire to have "culture months" for her own children so they would grow up with an awareness of other cultures.

> I have such a vast interest in [diversity]…by the time I'm having kids I'm going to have a vast knowledge. I want to have culture months with my kids, it's like "OK, let's talk about the Chinese culture" and…they could dress up as Chinese people and put on the little hats and eat what they're eating and you know next month, they'll be Ukrainian because that's part of our heritage, then maybe Polish month and just kind of go through and let the kids pick and learn about it as we're interacting. I think that would be fun. (Individual conversation, Oct. 19, 2005)

Aurora seemed to be suggesting that diversity was something that could be understood within categories you could learn about in the context of an educational activity. This made me wonder whether Aurora's interest in diversity might involve a kind of attraction to otherness, particularly to groups of "exotic others." This seemed to fit her narrative thread of being curious about others. However, meeting children as individuals, rather than as members of a group, caused Aurora to rethink how she did things. Learning about the prior history of James and the boy with the hockey stick in the club also brought to Aurora's attention the importance of considering context when applying club rules. Finally, her involvement with Cathy made her aware of the lengths she was going to in order to maintain control over her environment and protect her authority, at the expense of building relationships with children on a more personal level.

Taken together, these incidents dispositioned Aurora and interrupted the story she told of herself. She came into the youth club confident in her natural leadership and communication skills and yet aware of her tendency to impose her will when she felt things were not progressing to her satisfaction. She was leaving it with an understanding that these skills had been honed in a restricted context and would need to be reconsidered to fit the needs of a more diverse population.

Reconsidering Herself in Relation to Diversity

When she entered the youth club, Aurora told a story of knowing children. One of the ways in which the service learning dispositioned this knowledge was by bringing her face-to-face with the fact that while this may have been true of children of her own background, she struggled with establishing relationships with kids in the youth club. These children were different from those she had known or been involved with in the past. Aurora recognized that "what the youth club is definitely teaching me is another way to act with kids" (Site-specific group conversation, May 27, 2004).

Vinz (1997) refers to un-knowing as a process of giving up present understandings, assumptions, and beliefs. Aurora entered the club believing that she knew how to be with kids; she felt she knew how to communicate with them and keep them under control. Through the service learning experience, she realized that knowing about children from her own background did not ensure success with youth club children. She learned how much the children's histories played into who they were becoming. Getting to know a couple of children as individuals rather than as members of a collective provided a window into their lived reality. And knowing how complex that lived reality could be changed how she thought about herself in relation to being with children.

> I'm more interested and aware that my life is not the life of everybody else. (Individual conversation, May 2, 2004)

> As a child you assume your home life is like everybody else's. It's interesting that kids are coming in and I'm getting to see a bit more what's happening behind closed doors and how it's working. (Site-specific group conversation, May 27, 2004)

Learning about the complexity of James' home life and the boy with the hockey stick's prior experiences in the club helped Aurora appreciate Kendra's words of advice: "each child is different and you don't know what's going to happen when you say something, whatever you say" (Claire's field notes, June 19, 2004). Aurora began to awaken to the fact that while she might have known children of her own community, she did not necessarily know about all children and should not assume that what worked with children familiar to her would work in the youth club. She learned that getting to know each child's story is important—not just what they do in the club but also how they live their life at home. In this environment, she was surprised to learn she did not have the skills she thought she had, or at least that the skills that had worked in her prior involvements with children in her community had not worked here.

When I asked Aurora whether the hockey stick incident had been a dispositioning moment in her time in the club, she responded that it was one of many incidents, which, taken together, caused her to rethink the story she told of herself as a natural leader.

> It's more than [the hockey stick incident]. It was also the incident when [one kid] refused to leave. It was the time [another youth] overreacted to my question. It was me noticing that I was kicking kids out. I'd sit back and watch Kendra and the way she handled these situations, like she'd be pulling the kids in and they'd be talking and, I don't know. I find kicking the kids out, it isn't exactly what I want to do, and I didn't want to create another hockey stick incident. I was really scared that I had lost the respect of a lot of kids over that. Where I had gained respect over the gang incident, I thought I had lost over the hockey stick incident. Because I acted inappropriately, I hadn't dealt with it right. I was following kind of something Dolores would do…Dolores I guess had threatened [to call the police] all the time. (Individual conversation, June 19, 2004)

As had been the case with Cathy's teasing, Aurora's reaction to this boy's defiance was prompted by a fear of losing the respect she had gained by confronting the gang of youths a few weeks earlier. Not only did she recognize that in not considering him as an individual with a prior history in the club, she had "acted inappropriately," she also bumped up against how similar her approach was becoming to Dolores'. Like her, Aurora was becoming more reactive to kids' defiance and running out of strategies to deal with it other than kicking them out. This was something she had seen Dolores do and never questioned, until now, when she clearly saw the parallels others were pointing out between their respective responses to defiance. Aurora set about trying to shift who she was because of the resemblance others found. Three weeks later, she was still struggling with the parallels: "I'm trying not to resort to kicking out kids, right? I don't want to be Dolores" (Individual conversation, June 19, 2004). As I watched and listened to Aurora articulate her thoughts, I was struck by the shift that occurred since the early weeks in the club, when Aurora had described Dolores as someone who "had it all together" (Individual conversation, June 19, 2004).

Intent on changing her style, Aurora asked Kendra to coach her, to teach her how to interact more effectively with the youth club children. As one who thrived in a predictable environment, she struggled with her need to remain in control while she attempted to work out a less authoritative style. When we sat together for our final interview 3 months later, I learned that Aurora had changed her perspective on the need to shift to a less authoritative style.

> They said I was similar to Dolores and that's a huge fear...of what I would become. And sure that would totally create a shift or a change especially since I'm a dweller, like right off the bat I'm like, "well really, am I like that?" And I basically came to the conclusion that I'm not. But I do have similarities but I feel that I deal with things differently...I know it did bother me...and in some ways I am an alpha female. But that's me being aware of it too. Like, I know I can come in and take over a group but I don't always do it. But whether that makes me more of an alpha female or less of an alpha female I don't know...when people talk about what an alpha female is, when people talk about what Dolores was...you know it's really linked to a lot of negative connotations, right? And for me, like I try so hard, I feel, not to step on people's toes. I really thought that I had the ability to finesse it better I guess...I'm not as bad as when I was 18, 19 where I just denied it and...was just like "Nobody knows anything, right?" I think more now than I did then and it just floors me because I try so hard and I just thought it'd been dealt with and I've gone through that and that growing part of me is, is over, right? But at the same time, I recognize that I'll always be intimidating in the manner that I'm speaking. And I'm OK with that because it's the reason I'm becoming a teacher, it's what made me a good coach and it's what made me an excellent babysitter of 10 little cousins, you know. (Individual conversation, Oct. 19, 2004)

Aurora seemed to have shifted back to believing that the power to exude and maintain authority, which ensured her success as a babysitter and coach, was also going to be a strength she could rely on as a teacher; this despite her experiences to the contrary with the boy with the hockey stick as well as James and Cathy.

I was struck by this shift of perspective. How could Aurora have gone from wanting very much to change her authoritative style at the conclusion of the service learning project at the end of May to being quite certain by the middle of October that remaining true to it would ensure her success in working with students in the classroom? Looking back through the summer and fall transcripts, I noticed there had been a gradual shift back to a more familiar authoritative style.

Vinz (1997) helps me understand how this shift might have taken place. Once Aurora had woken up to the fact that she was not connecting with the children in the youth club as well as she might have, she began to question some of her prior beliefs about communicating with children in general. This put her in a very uncertain space. Vinz (1997) refers to such spaces as spaces of not knowing, where Aurora struggled with the ambiguity of trying to adopt a less controlling, more Kendra-like style of interacting with children. Given her acknowledged need to remain in control of her environment, I imagine this would have been a particularly uncomfortable place for Aurora. She worried that if she appeared tentative and hesitant, the children would consider her weak and lose respect for her. Even when she chose a position that she knew to be unfair, she held firm to it, reasoning that acknowledging her mistake would compromise her position of authority in the club.

> Today in the popcorn line-up, this fight broke out because I had handed out popcorn to who was in it, right? So I'm like, five kids down, I'm handing this

> popcorn out and there's this fight going down there and I'm like "What are you guys doing?" So I had to leave the popcorn and come over. "What are you guys doing? That's it! All three of you, back of the line, I don't want to deal with you." So one kid wasn't part of it, he had just been turned around at the point I walked up. He complained and I said, "Too bad." You know because I had said something so I'm like, "Too bad, back of the line." And he's like, "No, I wasn't part of it." And I realized, "You witch" like what I've learned is you say something, you have to follow through. "You know what? I don't have time for this." But then I turned to the other kids, I'm like "OK, was he a part of it, yes or no." And if the kids had said "Yes," even if it's just to incriminate him, he would have been gone, right? But the other kids said, "No, he wasn't." So I'm like, "Fine" and I went back to the popcorn thing while he took his place in line. And what I should have done was apologized but I didn't have time because I was dealing out popcorn, starting the movie. But like you really, like it's something I learned. You have to, you say something, you follow through, whether it's right or not. (Individual conversation, July 7, 2004)

Aurora recognized the boy deserved an apology but did not act on that knowledge, claiming more pressing responsibilities. I read her reaction as a choice she was making to maintain her authority. It seemed that her narrative thread of needing to be in control was resurfacing whereby once you say something, you "follow through, whether it's right or not" in order to appear strong. Despite her effort to shape a new story for herself, this piece of personal knowledge remained. In any event, as I considered her words, I wondered what effect her decision would have had on the children observing her. I wondered too how she was handling the internal discomfort she must have felt knowing she was acting against her better judgment.

When she had been unsure of herself in the past, Aurora often consulted other staff members. "I always doubt myself…I go behind the scenes and ask 'Did I do the right thing?'" (Individual conversation, July 7, 2004), but I had a sense that Aurora's relationship with them had also shifted over the last few weeks. Tensions had developed and she seemed to seek them out less for feedback and more for advice. She described how her purpose in consulting other staff members had changed; she now approached them more out of curiosity than out of a desire to learn from them.

> I'm just trying to think what do you…what's your opinion on this? How would you have done it? It doesn't mean that I'm going to take your way, it just means I want to know your opinion and then I'll make up my mind…I'll take what I think is right and then continue on my merry little way. (Individual conversation, August 5, 2004)

Having lost confidence and connection with other staff members, she went back to relying on herself; "I'll take what I think is right and then continue on my merry little way." I felt this was another important shift.

What had happened, I wondered, over the 8 weeks of summer during which Aurora had stayed on as an employee of the youth club? How could her view of the dispositioning moments during the service learning have changed so much? Where these moments had previously served to awaken her to her need to grow in certain areas, they were now serving to highlight what Aurora saw as organizational issues in the club. She seemed to be suggesting that it was the club environment (i.e., the perceived lack of rules and guidance), rather than her approach, which had been the source of some of her difficult moments.

> Tell me how to deal with the situation and I can deal with it that way but leave it up to me and then give me crap afterwards because I'm dealing with it wrong drives me nuts. That's where I have issues. If there's no rule, then you can't tell me I'm doing something wrong. Or you have to show me how to improve myself before you say that's wrong and you have to have an answer, why is that wrong? How would you have dealt with the situation? And they really didn't do that at all. (Individual conversation, Oct. 19, 2004)

Even the dispositioning effect of the hockey stick incident seemed to have shifted. In the spring, this incident had caused her to re-examine her communication skills and recognize the importance of getting to know individual kids' lives both in and out of the club. By the fall, Aurora was back to referring to herself as "I'm black and white in the sense of how you should act and I feel that all the staff should be acting in the same manner" (Individual conversation, Oct 19, 2004). And whereas earlier, she had expressed admiration for both Dolores and Kendra, then only Kendra, she now described both their styles as problematic.

> Yeah and the fact that most of them said, "Well it depends on the person" drove me nuts because one thing I know for sure about kids is they need structure. Kendra's very lenient and how she's going to react depends on the person. "Oh,

> this person has a lot of problems at their home so OK, we'll have a quick chat. But this person, he's a pain…and I haven't bonded with him very much so he's going to have a bigger consequence." Where Dolores was just like "You're all going to bend to me and you all do this." So the kids never knew where they stood at all. You know. (Individual conversation, Oct. 19, 2004)

As I re-read Aurora's words during this last interview, I was struck by the fact that the grey zones which opened up at the end of May as she began re-examining some of her beliefs seemed to have shifted again away from herself and back towards others. She had struggled trying to step out of who she was in order to negotiate a new way of being in the club. The self focus had been difficult to sustain and she was now questioning the wisdom of it, given that, as she now saw things, there were now three styles of discipline operating in the club. Now that she knew more about the kids' histories, she could generally accept the need for more flexibility with respect to club rules. At the same time, she had gained enough self-understanding to recognize that she could no more live in what she described as Kendra's totally grey zone than she could live in Dolores' totally black and white zone. Frustrated by what she perceived as a confusing environment for children who above all, needed consistency, Aurora was choosing to "do her own thing" (Individual conversation, March 2, 2004). She continued to challenge convention in order to create a more comfortable space for herself and live a more familiar story. This had been and continued to be a strong thread in her story to live by.

Reconsidering Herself in Relation to Teaching for Diversity

I came to the conclusion that somehow, over the summer and fall months, Aurora had found living in a space of un-knowing and not-knowing very difficult to sustain. Likely, the only way for her to get back to a knowing place where she could once again feel in control was to go back to a familiar story of herself as a natural leader. It seemed this well-anchored personal knowledge had resurfaced to disposition the shifts towards self-awareness she had made at the end of the service learning in the spring.

The Journey

Three ideas came to mind as I wondered why this recent shift might have occurred for Aurora. The first was that perhaps the change in Aurora's status to staff member following her 4 months of volunteering changed her positioning in the club. At the conclusion of the service learning project, Aurora was invited to stay on as a staff member for the youth club summer program. I wondered whether moving from volunteer to paid staff member might have changed the way Aurora lived out her story of leadership in the youth club. It was conceivable that, faced with having once again to establish her position of authority in the club, this time as a staff member, she might have felt the need to adopt a firm stand off the mark.

The second consideration that came up for me was that unlike the regular after-school program, the summer program included several field trips. During one of these outings, Aurora and Kendra took a group of children to a public park to attend an outdoor event. What surfaced during this outing was that Aurora and Kendra held different views on whether or not children should be accompanied by a staff member to the public washroom. While Kendra felt the children could find their own way, Aurora believed youth club staff had the responsibility to keep them safe at all times. She therefore took over the responsibility of accompanying every child who needed to use the bathroom that afternoon.

> I've always been trained if you're out with a group of kids, you keep an eye on them, right? They go to the bathroom; you go to the bathroom with them. And [Kendra] said, "Well the kids know how to go to the bathroom" and I'm like "That's not why you go with them. You go with them because you don't know if they'll be grabbed, you don't know if they'll be distracted by something and wander off." (Individual conversation, July 7, 2004)

I wondered whether the increased sense of responsibility she might have felt while away on a field trip prompted Aurora's decision to take over these duties. I felt her actions were probably prompted by her deep-rooted sense of responsibility towards children and her tendency to take over from others when she felt things were not being done as she felt they should be. These were powerful threads in her stories to live by.

Finally, I wondered whether the fact that Jorane and I were no longer volunteering alongside Aurora (the service learning project having ended) might have impacted the way she experienced the club over the summer months. Although Aurora and I continued to meet on a regular basis off-site, we were no longer able to reflect collaboratively on events we had both experienced. Typically, I listened as Aurora related events, but without being able to bring my own perspective to our conversations, I found it difficult to probe deeper into her experiences. It had always been in the places of overlap between our experiences that most of the reflection and learning had taken place during the service learning. Without a trusted and supportive presence in the club as well as regular conversations about what she was experiencing, I suspect Aurora would have felt discomfort as she continued to revisit and un-know some of her long-held beliefs. And given her strong need to be seen to be in charge and control her environment, it likely would have been particularly uncomfortable for her to live the uncertainty of not-knowing whether her attempt to shift her style was working or not.

> I'll put on a tough front and ask questions afterwards so people who first encounter me…[think] I'm a hard-nosed confident blah, blah, blah. People who get to know me find out that my approach is to step back, question this, question that, is this the right decision to make. (Individual conversation, July 7, 2004)

But even her habit of seeking feedback seemed to shift as the summer wore on and tension grew between Aurora and some of the other staff members. I imagine differences of opinion such as the one that occurred at the park impacted the relationship she could have with her colleagues. Did Aurora realize that by showing up Kendra over the bathroom issue, she might be considered an intimidating presence? Had she approached Kendra afterward to apologize for taking over as she had done with Jorane and me in the cooking club kitchen? I did not think so; she would likely have mentioned it. In any event, as Aurora described her last few weeks of summer in the youth club, it seemed she had not experienced it as the secure, collaborative environment she would have needed to continue sharing her uncertainties and wonder aloud about who she was becoming.

Without a supportive presence with whom she could share what she was experiencing, it is not difficult to imagine her retreating to a more comfortable, familiar, knowing place of being a natural leader and not allowing herself to show signs of weakness. This was a narrative thread that had been a part of who she was for a very long time.

CHAPTER 8: RECONSIDERING TEACHER EDUCATION FOR DIVERSITY

Closing Thoughts from the Threshold

For almost two years now, I have shared the lives of four very special women. We have gone from seeing each other weekly, to once a month, and now we keep in touch by phone, e-mail, and occasional visits. I know it's time to move on but I have trouble imagining us apart. There are still so many stories to be shared as each of them continues her journey. Thea and Aurora have entered their final year of teacher education and are beginning to think about their upcoming field experiences. Monique and Jorane graduated in the spring and are now practicing teachers. Both have called me to share early experiences—I sense their need to remain connected as they try to compose their place on their school landscapes. I sense how strongly they feel the presence of the administration, the parents, and the prescribed curriculum in this early stage. As they negotiate the transition from student to teacher, they are worrying about meeting expectations.

Perhaps I, too, am worrying about meeting expectations. I am acutely aware that this final chapter marks my own process of negotiating the transition from student to teacher, from doctoral student to teacher educator, from curriculum consumer to curriculum maker. At no other time during my research journey have I felt this threshold in such an embodied way. Until now, this research project has provided a comfortable space where I could wonder aloud, trust my own knowing and inquire into it in relationship with my participants. The stories I have told and retold have been co-constructed with them. I know it's time to step back now from these narrative accounts, look across them, and draw out what I have learned as a researcher and beginning teacher educator.

As I stand poised to enter the larger conversation about teacher education for diversity, I am looking out towards my own borderland. Maybe starting this final chapter is proving to be another dispositioning moment for me. As was the case for my participants when they entered our research sites, I do not know what to expect in this space of transition, hence the silent keyboard. This borderland is a place of uncertainty, a liminal space where I know neither my place nor what is expected of me. I sense a prevailing script that positions a beginning academic as one who knows, one who is expert. Yet the more I've learned about diversity with this study, the more complexity I see and the less I feel I know for certain. I wonder if my research findings will be considered worthy. Will I manage to articulate them clearly and translate them into viable curricular innovations? Will my contribution to the teacher education conversation be valued? Recalling the courage with which my participants entered and negotiated the borderland of the research site and the vulnerability with which they told and retold their stories to live by, brings the confidence I need to step away from the footnote voice[16] that has supported me so far and find my own. Here, then, is my story of how my participants' stories, told and retold, and our research journey together have shifted and shaped my knowing of what it means to learn about diversity in teacher education.

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[16] By footnote voice, I refer to the recognized knowings in educational literature that have supported my thinking throughout this research journey.

The sections that follow reflect what I have learned as my participants' stories have overlapped with mine and as our collective stories have, in turn, overlapped with the story of teacher education and diversity as told in Chapter 2. This narrative inquiry deepened my understanding of the importance of the personal practical knowledge of diversity preservice teachers bring into their teacher education program. Drawing on examples from my participants' stories, the first section of this chapter will address the importance of beginning teacher education with autobiographical identity work. Through this inquiry, I also concluded that for a learning activity to be considered educative, that is to say to have lasting impact for the learner, certain learning conditions must be respected. A second section of this chapter will address the importance of attending to these contextual, relational, and temporal aspects in setting up learning spaces for preservice teachers to learn about diversity. A final chapter section will explore how an inquiry-based community service learning experience within a re-imagined teacher education curriculum for diversity can open an educative borderland space within which preservice teachers can engage in connected learning over time and in relationship about lived experience, both for themselves and for the diverse learners they are destined to meet in the classrooms which await them.

Key Considerations from the Study

Learning about Diversity Beginning with Lived Experience

This narrative inquiry highlights the fact that diversity is a complex concept that can mean different things to different people. For this reason, learning about diversity cannot occur without considering each learner's prior knowledge. A key part of this study was to understand each of my participants' knowing of diversity before she embarked on the service learning project. The fact that all four participants volunteered for this research project might imply that each of them had a prior interest in diversity, perhaps a fair amount of knowledge of it, as if *it* was some commonly understood entity. Such was not the case. In fact, the threads that emerged from the autobiographical identity work I undertook with each participant suggested that their knowing of diversity and interpretation of what it meant to be open to it differed considerably. As this study unfolded, I understood how prior experience shaped the personal practical knowledge of diversity each of them brought into the study.

Monique's understanding of diversity was shaped by her lived experience of growing up close to an aunt with special needs. Her openness and positive attitude toward her aunt's difference were clearly evident, both in the loving perception (Lugones, 1987) she had of her aunt and in the sense of responsibility (Anzaldúa, 1999) she felt for educating others about the challenge of living with disability. Yet, as open as Monique was to mental and physical differences, her stories to live by reflected a very different attitude towards Aboriginal culture as a form of difference. Although she had little direct experience of Aboriginal families, she had grown up hearing stories from members of her family and her home community that characterized them as deficient. These stories became part of the personal practical knowledge Monique unconsciously carried into this research project.

Thea's involvement with cultural others was also limited before the study began. Her knowledge of diversity was based largely on impressions gathered while observing people during her childhood travels overseas, people with whom she had little direct contact as a result of her experience of living within the walls overseas. Although distant and transitory, these far away experiences must have triggered something in Thea because, throughout her life, she maintained a curious interest in people's differences. The personal practical knowledge of diversity she carried into this research study was therefore largely tied to otherness as a category of difference pertaining to people living abroad.

Aurora shared a similar curiosity about cultural differences as well as a story of growing up within the walls of privilege. Her interest in diversity had been sparked as well through observation but, unlike Thea, the differences that fascinated Aurora were those she observed in her immediate surroundings, particularly at school. Although her interest was also largely structured around categories of difference, Aurora seemed to approach learning about diversity almost as an intellectual exercise. I had a sense she was seeking to understand what members of a particular social or cultural collective were all about as if she could learn a discrete set of skills to *deal with* each category. As the eldest female grandchild in her family, Aurora was used to being in a position of authority over members of her extended family and family friends. A sense of leadership based on having what it takes to be in control of her environment was part of the personal practical knowledge Aurora brought into the study.

Jorane came into the study positioned as someone who already had extensive cross-cultural knowledge. The personal practical knowledge she carried addressed linguistic, cultural, and social differences she had come to know through experiences in her personal well as her professional life both at home and abroad. By her own admission, she felt drawn to people of Latin American heritage because of their passion and commitment to social justice. Through the narrative threads of her stories to live by, I determined that Jorane's interest in diversity situated her, in part by choice, in part by experience, on the margins of mainstream society. Throughout the study, she seemed more readily able to identify with children growing up in culturally and socially different environments.

I highlight these differing perspectives on diversity through a selection of statements made by the participants toward the end of the research study. Looking across these re-tellings, it is interesting to note the unique way in which diversity caught each participant's attention in this study.

Monique:

> I've learned to see the kids' point of view. It wasn't just a matter of reading you know so and so died of a stabbing in this part of the city. [Aboriginal] kids live certain realities that I can never dream of and that are their realities. I'd seen them every day [in the youth club] every week, week to week. It was like, in spite of that, they still have this other side of them and just to see different things through their eyes I think was like…an eye opener.…I could get past some of my negative opinions on their parents and what must be going on…Because [the parents]

> obviously care about their kids…I didn't even have access to that social context before. (Individual conversation, Oct. 21, 2004)

Thea:

> Diversity in traveling is different because you're seeing the diversity in that country…We always talk about how people in different countries live differently than we do…But I think the diversity I learned through the work at [the youth club] was diversity in our own community…here you deal with those different cultures but they're in a Canadian setting. You know how they are here so I think diversity when you travel just opens your eyes to what is out there but when you work at the [youth club] it's like first hand experience of what is out there within our city and what you may have to deal with. (Individual conversation, Oct. 27, 2004)

Jorane:

> I'm a total outcast, well outcast from the mainstream I guess…that's what I feel, even if I don't choose it. I feel it. I just kind of went there. And I'm thinking it could be because of my [family] genes; it could also be that my experience in Saudi Arabia kind of made me interested in a lot of other things too. Because I think I look for where there's passion in life and that's where I find it. I don't necessarily find it here. (Individual conversation, Oct. 30, 2004)

Aurora:

> It's completely shocking for me. It's brand new for me. Communicating with my cousins where I have authority, where I have power, where I already have the respect, right? With these kids it's different. Like I can sit down and talk with my cousin…I know his family history. So I can communicate with him. But with these kids, I can't so it's so frustrating. (Individual conversation, June 19, 2004)

These retellings confirm that each participant engaged with diversity in different ways according to the dominant storylines in their narratives of experience. Autobiographical identity work helped me identify the beginning threads that came forward to orient what each participant attended to in this study. Their stories retold reflect shifts in their understanding of the particular aspect of diversity they focused on through the course of the study. Looking across them, I saw that each one had shifted their understanding of diversity in some way.

I now turn my attention to what it was that enabled these shifts in understanding to occur. I contend that the on-site and related off-site work undertaken by my participants through service learning created a learning space that had contextual, relational, and temporal qualities that combined to create an educative experience. In this learning space, my participants and I were able to engage in the kind of sense-making which led us to construct new understandings about diversity.

Learning About Diversity in Dispositioning Contexts

One premise of this study was that in order to learn about diversity, prospective teachers need much more than to learn about it intellectually through theory. They need to engage with it practically and experientially. While the practicum is meant to provide such an engagement, studies (Sleeter, 2001) have shown that practicum students are most often placed in classroom contexts which closely resemble what they themselves experienced as students. In keeping with Vinz's (1997) belief that we need to intentionally create spaces to disposition preservice teachers from their tacit understandings, this study was situated in contexts which were qualitatively different from traditional field placements. The participants' initial reactions to the after-school youth clubs confirm just how unfamiliar an environment it proved to be. Situated in a community context, the youth club offered an opportunity to engage with children in a space unlike anything they had known in the university classroom or would experience in their future practicum experience. I came to think of our engagement in the youth club as having created an in-between space or a borderland space where my participants' stories bumped up against children's stories and created the kind of disequilibrium which Vinz feels is necessary to focus attention on prior and as well as evolving knowledge.

Connecting with Children's Lives Outside School

Engaging with children in a space situated both literally and metaphorically between home and school provided us with a window on the everyday lived reality of children. Not only did we have the opportunity to interact with individual children from different social and cultural backgrounds, we had a chance to meet their siblings, and occasionally, even a parent. Meeting and getting to know children in this cross-age community setting provided a sense of the social and cultural contexts in which they were growing up. As my participants laid their own childhood experiences alongside the children's and youths', they noticed the contrasts and this led to discussions about the extent to which our original landscapes (Greene, 1995) shape us. As Monique got to know Willie through the stories he and his siblings told, she began to piece together an image of an Aboriginal family that did not fit the collective image of deficiency she carried as part of her prior knowledge. As she learned first hand of the social obstacles they faced daily, her stories of deficiency gave over to a new story about an individual family's resiliency in the face of hardship. A similar shift occurred for Thea. Emerging from a 9-hour session of having her hair braided by a mother of African heritage, she was able to tell a new story of parents caring for children from a cultural perspective different from her own. Aurora also gained some insight into family life outside the club as she got to know James. Until then, she had held a very black and white view of rules and the way they should be enforced in the club, but getting to know some of the realities of James' home life triggered her to reconsider her script of authority as the foundation of her involvement with him. Engaging with children in the borderland between home and school provided an opportunity for my participants and me to interact with children's whole lives and connect with their lived reality in a way that would never have been possible in a classroom or in the context of a traditional practicum setting.

Trading Spaces: Finding the Familiar in the Strange and the Strange in the Familiar

When children enter a classroom for the first time, they enter in the midst of a dizzying world of timetables, lessons, bells, schoolbooks, and rules, so many of which are familiar to the teacher, so few of which connect to anything in a child's known world. Recalling our early impressions of the youth club, it was clear that it was my participants and I who were entering an unfamiliar world. It felt a little like joining a parade (Geertz, 1983) that was already in motion by the time we turned up. We knew neither the parade's destination nor what cadence or combination we were expected to fall into as we joined it along the way. It was difficult to find our way in a setting where children dropped in whenever and for as long as they wished to engage in activities of their choosing. The only predictable event seemed to be the hot meal served daily. We learned in time, however, that while they may have seemed unstructured to us, both youth clubs had their own set of rules, expectations, and stories. Everyone knew these, but us.

This was clearly an environment unlike anything we had ever known before. Monique had to rethink how she was going to connect with children who seemed not to notice her comings and goings and parents who did not look after their children as she felt they should. Thea had a similar concern about parents of immigrant children and found it particularly challenging to engage with children without access to personal information or parents as she had experienced as a dance teacher or summer camp counsellor. Accustomed to interacting with children and youth in the Latin American community, Jorane found it difficult to engage Aboriginal teenagers in an environment she felt offered little to connect with her sense of social justice. Aurora, who had entered the site with a story of knowing children, experienced trouble communicating with teens who did not defer to her authority the way her brothers, younger cousins, or sports team participants always had. As a seasoned teacher, I had to consciously refrain from engaging the children with questions about school-related topics.

This was indeed a dispositioning space for five competent, well-educated women used to being with children. Very little of the personal practical knowledge we had constructed in our white middle-class families and through our respective involvements with children, be it through school, summer camps, sports and community events, or parenthood, was of any use to us in this liminal space. Without books, basketballs, games, community events, or family relationships to mediate our interactions, my participants and I had to work hard each week to attend closely to youth club children as individuals, trying to hang on to something we could remember as a way to reconnect the following week. Like the child who enters school for the first time, we were the ones faced with the challenge of trying to fit ourselves into a storied landscape where we didn't know the stories.

Connecting with Children's Shifting Identities

Much of what my participants and I learned about children's lives, we learned each week in the youth club kitchen. This was a space where we were able to interact in a more sustained way with small groups of children. For this reason, I came to think of the Cooking Club as a borderland space within the borderland that was the youth club. As we engaged with children in this more intimate space and watched them move back and forth across to the larger public space of the youth club, we were provided with a glimpse of the way children shape and live out their identities in different ways in different contexts.

Thea's experience of Michael serves as a good example. Although Michael had been a part of the youth club for many weeks, he had not come to Thea's attention prior to joining the Cooking Club. Had Thea not had the opportunity to observe Michael in the confines of the kitchen and seen the way his level of physical and verbal energy impacted him socially, she might have missed noticing how much he reminded her of herself as a hyperactive child. Had it not been for her parents having the means and time to channel her excess energy into sports activities, she too might have lived a story of being a social other like Michael. Had it not been for the Cooking Club, Michael's whole story might never have come to Thea's attention.

Similarly, had Monique not found herself among a group of children gathered around a mixing bowl in the kitchen, she might have missed the opportunity to hear Willie share the story of his hands and have it become part of her evolving knowledge about Aboriginal family life. This thread of awareness she picked up about Willie's challenge through this conversation remained with her and grew stronger as she got to know Willie's siblings and gain more insight into his lived reality both at home and in the research site. A few weeks later when she noticed Willie being maligned in the larger youth club setting by the same group of boys who had part of the Cooking Club conversation, it was as if this new thread of awareness through personal connection with Willie wove its way into the fabric of her conscious attention. Willie's marginalization connected with something she knew deeply through her experience with her aunt; she now included Willie among those who, like her aunt, deserved to be included in society and treated with respect. She felt compelled to respond in order to educate others, as she would have done had her aunt or someone with a mental or physical disability been the target of ridicule.

Watching the way Willie and the Cooking Club boys' identities shifted as they moved in and out of the kitchen, Monique began to understand that the youth club was a storied landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995); Willie and the boys were characters in a public story which was larger than the story we heard voiced in the Cooking Club kitchen. Observing them, she learned how they coped with uncomfortable moments through shifting identities. She could now recombine this new knowledge with her prior personal practical knowledge about shifting identities and broaden her understanding of diversity to include social and cultural differences in respect of Aboriginal families living in an urban community. Had Monique never come to know Willie as she did in the intimate Cooking Club space, she would not have been awake to his difference in the more public space.

In providing this opportunity to see children move across the intimate and public spaces of this youth club setting, the Cooking Club created a unique learning space within a learning space. The larger youth club setting was also unique in that it provided an opportunity to engage with children in a context that was neither like home, nor like school. Finally, the fact that it was situated somewhere in between what education students typically experience as theory-driven teacher education classrooms and practice-driven practicum settings, the youth club provided a learning space where participants and I could engage with children from diverse backgrounds as children, and not as students. The experience of getting to know children as individuals across all these representations of borderland spaces created moments of disequilibrium (Vinz, 1997) that prompted us to focus attention on prior assumptions. By providing an opportunity to connect directly with individual children and their stories, the youth club context engaged us emotionally. It elicited the kind of attitudinal involvement Vinz considers necessary to open ourselves up to new ways of knowing.

Learning About Diversity Through Relationship

In the previous section, I explored the contextual qualities of the learning space created by the youth club environment and emphasized the importance of dispositioning as a way to focus attention on prior knowledge. As I looked across my participants' experiences and considered the amount of time each of them spent in their respective youth clubs, I concluded that simply spending time in such a dispositioning environment was not, in and of itself, the only condition necessary for them to construct new knowledge about diversity. Thea, Jorane, Monique, and Aurora spent between 3 and 7 months volunteering 4 hours a week in their respective youth club settings. Thea and Jorane spent 3 and 4 months respectively; Monique and Aurora, 7. While Monique and Aurora's volunteering involvement covered, if not the same period, at least the same amount of time overall (7 months), it is important to point out that Monique spent the entire 7-month period on site in relationship with me and 4 of them in relationship with Thea. Aurora, on the other hand, spent a total of only 4 months on site in relation with

Jorane and me, then stayed on an additional 3 months without us. I highlight this difference because this study illustrates that in addition to spending time in dispositioning environments, shifting a story also requires time spent in relationship reflecting on the experience of being dispositioned. I now turn to the relational aspects of the learning space created by the combined effect of both the on-site and off-site involvements my participants and I had in connection with the service learning in the youth club.

Beginning with Relationship

Before the service learning experience began, I held an initial autobiographical interview with each participant by way of an informal, open-ended conversation. Two participants brought photographs, one brought an annal, and the fourth spoke without visual aid. In addition to fulfilling the desire to tell one's story, the one-on-one autobiographical interview time also fulfilled a desire for relationship (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992). When we entered the research sites for the first time, we were not strangers to each other. This connection through personal story proved to be an important first step in establishing a bond of confidence and trust which, as the project progressed, enabled participants to willingly explore their knowledge of diversity.

Connecting with Others On-Site: Being There

Participants volunteered in pairs in each of the two youth club sites. This presented several advantages. First, it was reassuring to not be alone in such a dispositioning environment. It also brought to light participants' different interpretations of similar events. The fact that I was volunteering alongside each pair of participants meant a third set of eyes and ears to observe events as they unfolded each week in the research sites. It was particularly important to be volunteering together not just for the reassuring presence of another but also to be present to hear triggers which led to very important meaning-making conversations.

This was particularly apparent during what Monique and I came to know as the art room fiasco I described earlier. As I confided to Monique how shell-shocked I felt as a teacher who had successfully led children through art in the past, we enjoyed a good laugh. Perhaps hearing my admission opened up a space where we could both be vulnerable and built an environment trusting enough for her to confide her prior assumption about Willie's hands. When that conversation occurred, Monique and I had been volunteering together for two months as part of the pilot study. Had we not, during this time, built a sense of trust, I am not certain that she would have felt comfortable sharing her feelings with me. Had she not spent time in relationship with Thea and me, and eventually with Aurora and Jorane as well, I am not certain this critical moment of self-facing would have become such a turning point for her and encouraged others to share their own wonders.

Similarly, Aurora's awareness of her story to live by would likely not have come to light had Jorane and I not been there to hear youth club employees compare her to Dolores and witness her reaction to these comments. These exchanges helped us see her frustration at being scripted as authoritative even as she was attempting to live a new story of herself in the club. It opened opportunities for Aurora to share her feelings during further research conversations. Jorane and I also witnessed the hockey stick incident and 'being there' at that moment created an opportunity to explore the circumstances leading up to and following it as part of our research conversations. It was during one of these discussions that Aurora began to voice her doubts about her ability to communicate with youth in the club, a moment which proved to be a turning point in her story.

Connecting With Others Off-Site: Going Back to Being There

Site-specific Group Conversations.

Youth club events were not only experienced in relationship; we also came together to remember and explore them. Each week as I drove home from each of my research sites, I dictated field notes into my voice recorder and transcribed them as a way to reconstruct each evening's events as well as my observations and impressions. I had also asked my participants to write and e-mail field notes to me weekly. Reading across their field notes and mine, I could see what had caught our respective attentions during our time each week in the youth club. Sometimes I saw overlaps, sometimes dissonance, and it was these meeting or rubbing points that became catalysts for reflection during our weekly site-specific group conversation. These conversations allowed us to relive moments, reconstruct events, and wonder aloud about what we had observed and how we felt in relation to these events.

While off-site research conversations were held weekly with participants in one site, they took place less frequently in conjunction with the second site. One of the reasons for this was that Jorane and Aurora did not engage in writing weekly field notes.

This meant that when we came together in conversation, there was less to trigger and guide discussion. The absence of independently created field notes in the second research site meant there was less to draw on as we tried to reconstruct and reflect on events. I also found that one participant had more voice than the other during our research conversation. Although I had no expectation of equal involvement, I wonder whether a contribution of field notes might have kept the conversation focused in a more equitable way on both participants' experiences. I learned from this discrepancy that different relational contexts bring out different kinds of knowledge and I consciously tried to make space for continued one-on-one conversation with Jorane so she too felt more engaged in *going back to being there*.

Cross-site Group Conversations.

Throughout the research study, my participants and I also met in a response group of five for group conversations. The purpose of these monthly meetings was to look across both sites as a way to gain wider perspective on two communities reflecting different demographics. In this larger context, differences of opinion sometimes emerged and led to new perspectives. There was the time, for example, when Monique voiced her concern about the reverse racism she felt was created by federal government hiring guidelines. In response, Aurora challenged her to read up on the visible minorities' legislation to be better informed about Canada's legacy of racism directed at people of Aboriginal descent.

Another advantage of looking across two settings was the opportunity to explore the effect of different paradigms of service. I saw these paradigms reflected in the way club employees dealt with the hot evening meal in each site. The topic came up during a collaborative conversation when Aurora and Jorane told Monique and Thea about an adult couple who showed up at their youth club one evening offering to participate in clean-up duties in exchange for a hot meal. This story triggered Monique and Thea to talk about the strict dinnertime routine enforced at their youth club whereby children who did not show enough responsibility to show up on time were turned away. Initially, they were shocked that a child would be prevented from eating if there was food, but the director explained to us how important it was for the children's future that her youth club not be considered a soup kitchen.

> It's a struggle. I mean, when the kids come in late. We basically like to serve at 5 and if by 5:10 they're not here, then it's "I'm sorry, you missed out." That's always interesting when someone new comes in because you know I remember when [our social worker] started. She said, "Oh, my God, they're hungry. What do you mean they can't eat?" But you know the thing is I have to look at the bigger picture and they will learn believe me that the dinner is at 5 o'clock. It's more to teach them, just the way that we have a sit-down meal. Some centers have it buffet style and food's always out and they just take it and eat it whenever. [This dinner rule] has a little tiny bit to do with the way I was raised too. Five o'clock was dinnertime and we all, as a family, had to be home. It was the family sitting down together, which is I think really important and a lot of these kids

> have never ever experienced that in their lives. Well, you've been here so many times [and seen how] we constantly cue them all the way through supper. You know, they'll be like one foot up on the stool and maybe on the table, I guess that's exaggerating but many have just no concept of the dinner hour, of coming together. And when they go out into the world, they'll have some sense of manners. I mean that's another thing too that I think I've incorporated because my parents were always big on please and thank you and excuse me and I just think that's so important. Definitely, with the dinner, I know that it's a tough [rule] and I struggle with it too but when a little one comes in, [and says] "Oh, I missed it." [I respond], "I'm sorry," but I can tell you that tomorrow, they'll be there at the right time, they will be. (Individual conversation with youth club director, Dec. 6, 2004)

To the director, dinnertime at the youth club served a purpose other than simply feeding children. It provided a setting where children could come together to learn about time management, social skills, and table etiquette, all skills she felt would serve them well in the future. Through leadership practices that drew both on her own experience of growing up in the vicinity of the youth club and her knowledge of education as the key to improving life chances, the director was infusing the club with values she felt were important to their social and cultural survival. Although she recognized how difficult it was to follow through with her purpose in the face of a disappointed child, the director was striving to make youth club a space where she could help children learn to live responsibly as individuals and contributing members of a community.

During another collaborative conversation, Monique shared her impressions of Helen, a parent who was a regular visitor in the same youth club. She told of her initial resentment of this mother's presence and how surprised she was when Helen was given additional responsibilities as a parent volunteer at the youth club. While her parenting style was nothing like anything Monique had known, she learned through the relationship she developed with her son, Dave, that Helen was a caring parent in her own way. Had Monique not had access to this new perspective on Helen's parenting skills, her story of parents' ways of caring for their children might not have shifted. Had this collaborative conversation not taken place, Thea, Aurora, and Jorane would have missed the opportunity to hear perspectives of youth club parents other than those they had themselves observed.

As I revisited my field notes and transcripts of these collaborative conversations, Boyle-Baise's (2002) paradigms of service came to mind. I had a strong sense that Monique and Thea's club reflected a community-building orientation while Aurora and Jorane's club reflected more of a charity paradigm, perhaps a civic education one, given the expectation of a chore contribution in exchange for food. Looking across the retellings my participants took away from their involvement in these two clubs, I determined that different service orientations influenced the kind of interactions they observed during their service learning placement and, by extension, impacted the way their knowledge of diversity had shifted. Without the opportunity to engage in collaborative conversation across sites that took us back to being there, our attention to these different service perspectives might not have emerged.

When Connection Falters: Being There…Alone

While Aurora's understanding of diversity benefited from having access to other people's lived realities through relationship, it is important to note what happened to her knowing once the opportunity for relationship ended. By the time Jorane and I had concluded our time in the research site, Aurora had secured employment there for the summer months during which the relationships Aurora had with other youth club employees were precarious at best. In the absence of safe relationships, Aurora did not feel confident to sustain exploration of her prior knowledge. She reverted to a familiar pattern of taking control and never showing weakness in the presence of youth club children or employees. This was a story reminiscent of the one she had told prior to entering the club. With each passing week, she seemed to retreat further into herself, drawing on an embodied knowledge of herself as a rugged individualist (Britzman, 1986) who made sense of her environment by following rules and keeping things under control.

Learning about Diversity through Reflection over Time

Having explored the contextual and relational aspects of the youth club learning space in the two previous sections, I now turn to the temporal aspects. While I recognized that being placed in dispositioning contexts and having the opportunity to reflect on the experience in relationship were important conditions of the learning space, I did not appreciate the full impact of my participants' service learning experiences until we met for our final autobiographical interview several months after they had left the research site. Following these conversations, I returned to my transcripts and field notes; this helped me see how my participants had gone on to carry threads of knowledge from the research site to new contexts. Over time, and through reflection in relationship, this knowledge continued to evolve as it was combined and recombined through subsequent experiences to create new understandings about diversity.

This was particularly evident in Monique's story as I outlined in the *Journey* section of her story retold (Chapter 4). Once her volunteering ended, Monique moved to her parents' home in Pine Valley where she continued her involvement with children, but in a context very different from the youth club. The demonstration farm school setting required her to engage with large groups of mostly Aboriginal children for very short periods of time. Monique quickly became frustrated by her lack of success in connecting in any meaningful way with the children for whom she was responsible. She had left the youth club telling a new story of Aboriginal children as a result of sustained engagement with them in the informal setting of the youth club. The demonstration school context seemed to be eclipsing this new story and pulling forward her familiar story of Aboriginal deficiency. By July, however, when she was unsettled by her experience of trying to purchase paint thinner in her hometown, she seemed to pick up the story thread seemingly left dangling in the demonstration farm context and began once again to attend to Aboriginal people's realities. Additional threads joined in as she began exploring her family story of Aboriginal experience with her mother. The result was that when Monique and I sat together for our final research interview in the fall, she seemed to have woven these various threads together into new understandings of diversity that I saw reflected in her plan to begin her teaching career in her home province.

What I take away from Monique's learning journey is an understanding that just as her service learning experience dispositioned her into rethinking prior assumptions and picking up new threads of knowledge about diversity, a subsequent experience in a different context also dispositioned her. Had Monique's involvement with this study ended after her service learning placement, I would have missed the opportunity to see how, over time, the thread of new knowledge she had constructed in the youth club was eventually picked up and strengthened into broader understandings of diversity. It is important to note that even if Monique's new knowledge was dispositioned in a context that called forth her familiar embodied knowledge, the new threads of understanding she had constructed through service learning had remained present. Although not evident through Monique's thoughts and actions in this second context, these threads had evidently taken on an embodied quality and were pulled forward once again in a different context and a different point in time to be woven into new understandings of diversity.

Similarly, when Thea left the youth club site to return home for the summer, her dispositioning continued as well. She had once again found employment as a summer camp counsellor but was returning to this familiar work context with a different outlook. Awakened by Michael to the possibility of otherness in herself, she now carried a thread of new knowledge which, over the summer, evolved into a reconsideration of her own story of school and long-held assumptions about the qualities required to become a teacher. When she learned of her sister's successful volunteering involvement with a special needs high school student, she began to wake up to the possibility that there might be attributes to a good teacher other than the ones she possessed. Thea picked up another thread when her mother opened her eyes to the fact that spousal abuse knew no social, academic, or cultural boundaries. By sharing her friend's story, her mother helped Thea awaken to the idea that as a white upper middle-class woman, she, too, could potentially be one of those other women in the shelter. Although Thea mentioned her mother's work at the shelter during her initial autobiographical interview, it was not until our final interview that this particular story emerged. The new significance the women's shelter story took on for Thea highlights the way knowledge can be pulled forward differently depending on context and time. It also brings my façade story to mind once again because, despite having heard Evelyn's residential school story when I first met her for coffee, it did not become significant for me until many weeks later when our cultural perspectives clashed over the façade.

Carr (1986) would refer to this event as a moment of rupture in my narrative coherence. He believes that as we move through life, we constantly search for what makes sense in an effort to achieve narrative coherence. Clandinin and Connelly (1992) speak of narrative unities which emerge from our past experiences and which act as a continuum to give our lives meaning in the present and shape our actions in the future. And what makes sense to us is what is familiar, as in knowledge that has become embodied as part of our narrative history. My narrative history reflected a long-standing connection to Faculté Saint-Jean. By establishing a direct link between my story of cultural survival and Evelyn's story of cultural assimilation, the façade moment ruptured my narrative coherence. Carr helps me think of the way moments of rupture hold the potential to shape new knowledge by causing us to pay attention in ways that, until we find ourselves in a particular context and moment in time, have not been possible. Once awakened to my own story, I could not ignore it. This was how I interpreted what happened to me with Evelyn. It seemed also to be the case for Monique and Thea as the story threads about diversity they picked up in the research site eventually took on new significance once they carried them to other contexts over time.

Seeing From New Vantage points

When I met with each of my participants for the final interview in the fall, I came to the conclusion that stepping back and seeing the big picture of their experience over time and across contexts had been important. Moving away from the research site towards other contexts seemed to afford them the opportunity to reflect again from a wider perspective across both time and place. Perhaps the temporary break in our close relationship had also been helpful. I know that stepping away from our weekly meetings and immersing myself in transcripts and field notes provided the time and space for me to consider how my participants' stories had unfolded over time. While I missed our weekly volunteering and research conversations, the time away allowed me to pull back from feeling pressed up against the story (Schroeder, 1996) and to reflect, from a wider vantage point, on the way their knowledge was evolving. Similarly, had my participants not carried their now embodied new knowledge from the youth club to other contexts, it is unlikely they would have been able to engage in the kind of reflection and meaning-making which took place both when I shared interim research texts and later, entire story chapters.

Carrying this idea further, had I not stepped away from the 'busyness' of the classroom in order to return to university, I might never have had the opportunity to create the Identity Memo. As a narrative reflective tool, it helped me see why diversity had become a preoccupation and how I composed my knowledge of diversity over time and across contexts. I believe this study served a similar purpose for my participants. It gave me the opportunity to help them understand how they engaged, reflected, engaged again, and reflected again, composing and recomposing stories of themselves in relation to diversity as they moved through different contexts over time.

Seeing from a vantage point that provided perspective across time and place, I could better appreciate that constructing new knowledge and learning to live differently in relation to diversity is a very complex process. The uncertain path of my participants' journeys implies that while telling a new story may be easy, living a new story is much more difficult. I recall how Aurora pointed out an interesting irony once we had read through her entire chapter together. On the one hand, she had told a story of wanting very much to break down the barriers of diversity, yet she recognized that she lived a story of seeking to understand people as members of categories based on social or cultural differences. This observation had not come up until we read through her story chapter together. It was as if seeing from the vantage point of her story told and retold triggered reflection that brought further insight. As my participants created, told, and retold stories of their lives, they were also creating their identities. I came to understand that as the stories they told shifted in response to changing circumstances, so too did their identities. Their stories show that developing one's identity is a fluid and improvisational process that requires reflection about self-knowledge across contexts and over time.

I am reminded of the parallel Bateson (1989) draws between composing a life and making Middle-Eastern pastry. Just as working with phyllo pastry requires butter to be "layered in by repeated foldings" (p. 214), composing a life involves "a continual reimagining of the future and reinterpretation of the past to give meaning to the present" (pp. 29–30), a gradual process which takes place over time and involves repeatedly reconsidering new experiences in relation to old ones to reach new layers of understanding. Although evident in all four stories, this sense of overtimeness (Steeves & McKenzie Robblee, unpublished) is particularly evident in Monique and Thea's stories. By reflecting on experiences across contexts and over time, they were able to pick up story threads and weave them into the broadened and deepened understandings of diversity that emerged during our final autobiographical interviews. I concluded that while being dispositioned had been a critical condition in order for my participants to construct new knowledge of diversity, what was equally important was the opportunity to collaboratively reflect on their evolving knowledge as they moved on to different contexts over time.

Looking Backwards and Forwards

As I look across my four participants' stories as they overlap with mine, I now recognize that if learning about diversity is to occur and have lasting impact, that is, if we are to shift the telling *and* the living of one's story of diversity, then learning spaces must be shaped to respect certain contextual, relational, and temporal conditions. This study demonstrated the potential for preservice teachers to learn about diversity through carefully constructed, cross-cultural engagement. The direct, informal, and sustained interaction my participants were able to have in the youth clubs with children from such diverse social and cultural backgrounds opened up a window of lived realities very different from their own. As their lived experiences bumped up against the children's, unsettling moments occurred for them which focused their attention not only on the lives of children, but also on their reaction to them. The opportunity my participants had to explore and inquire into these moments together was also a critical part of this study because it was how they came to consider and reconsider the knowledge of diversity they carried as part of their narrative histories. Finally, this study highlights the fluidity of the process of knowledge construction/reconstruction and the importance of looking holistically across experiences over time. Just as new experiences can disposition old knowledge, so too can new knowledge be dispositioned by subsequent experiences. Each of my participants' stories demonstrates how knowledge of diversity can be composed, interrupted, recomposed, interrupted and recomposed again. In some ways, this study did for my participants what the Identity Memo had done for me, that is, highlight the importance of context, relationship, and time in the process of learning about diversity.

As I reconsider my original service learning experience with Chris in the light of these new insights, I begin to understand why it was so disappointing. I was misguided in thinking that after 12 hours spent in a band-controlled school, Chris would emerge responsive to Aboriginal students' needs, as if there were some specific and agreed-upon set of skills he would observe and implicitly pick up. Although I continue to believe that learning about diversity through direct cross-cultural contact is a worthy idea, I now understand why brief glimpses across cultures such as Chris' experience in the band-controlled school only serve to affirm an us and them mentality, reminiscent of the tourist multicultural approach to teacher education for diversity. Left unexplored, what Chris picked from his cross-cultural engagement only reinforced his prior knowledge. In light of both Chris' and my participants' experience with service learning, I am drawn back to Dewey's (1938) contention that experience alone is not enough to ensure that learning will occur. Simply sending students to volunteer in settings such as after-school programs and community centers is not enough to ensure they will become more responsive to other cultures.

Dewey (1938) wrote that the quality of an educational experience depends on *context, interaction,* and *continuity*. Widely recognized as an early promoter of service learning, he believed practical learning in the community was an important part of education for a democratic society. On the belief that access to the community enabled students to draw on all their experiences, he promoted work placements and classroom visits by community and business leaders (Kezar & Rhoads, 2001). The idea of a "seamless relationship with the community" (p. 162) highlights Dewey's philosophy of continuity which was based on a belief that people, as holistic beings, learn best by engaging the mind, body, and spirit, connecting experience and knowledge. Picking up on this idea, Clandinin and Connelly (1991) describe continuity as

> the succession of situations within which experience occurs. Without continuity, there is no such thing as experience. Every experience is what it is in part because of what is brought to it, via prior experience, and in part because of its influence on the future. (p. 261)

Building on that idea they later wrote,

> One lives, looks backward and forward, and then lives again. It is this desire, more so than the desire to know, that, for Dewey, drove human experience and was the source of education. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 156)

Dewey also saw education as social. He believed that reflecting on individual experience in relationship could lead to more complex understandings. As this study demonstrated, structuring a learning space that focused individual and collective attention on experiences lived before, during, and after the service learning took place allowed my participants and me to engage in the kind of reflective inquiry Dewey might have imagined when he spoke of continuity and interaction. By encouraging my participants to reflect collaboratively across contexts, over time, and in relation to their prior understandings of diversity, I was able to shape an inquiry space which was educative because it allowed for the gradual, unfolding process of becoming (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992) of combining and recombining knowledge created through lived experience. Reflecting collaboratively on experience is what enabled my participants to reach a more nuanced understanding of diversity and of themselves in relation to diversity.

If my participants were able to learn about diversity through a carefully structured learning space that connected service with learning as part of this study, then might similar learning spaces be shaped for the benefit of larger groups of preservice teachers within a teacher education program? Given current realities, I would argue that shaping such spaces would have to begin with re-imagining a teacher education curriculum for diversity.

Towards a New Borderland in Teacher Education for Diversity

I have difficulty seeing how my participants' narratives of experience could have unfolded as they did in teacher education programs reflecting plotlines as I presented them in Chapter 2. I believe selectively attending to diversity, avoiding attention to it, or diverting attention from it constrains the possibility for preservice teachers to live, tell, retell, and relive their stories. The unfortunate result of these approaches is that far too many student teachers remain "prisoners of their own biographies" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 95) for lack of time and opportunity to explore them. I believe that addressing the complex issues of identity formation in relation to diversity requires rethinking how we understand curriculum and what it means for teacher education for diversity.

Reconsidering Curriculum as Lived Experience

Currently, teacher education programs tend to focus on what Connelly and Clandinin (1988) coined as knowledge for teachers, that is, a discrete set of skills which preservice teachers first acquire in university and go on to apply in the classroom setting. But as I learned from my Identity Memo, teachers' thoughts and ideas have a history of lived experience. Building on Dewey's idea of experience as curriculum, Connelly and Clandinin (1988) theorize that prospective teachers all come into teacher education as knowing individuals who hold knowledge embedded in their lives, embodied and expressed in their thoughts and actions. This personal practical knowledge constitutes what they refer to as teacher knowledge. As their lives unfold, teachers make meaning of their experiences by telling and retelling stories of themselves. "It is a particular way of reconstructing the past and the intentions for the future to deal with exigencies of a present" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 25). A reconceptualized curriculum would need to recognize the narrative qualities of teacher knowledge and be rooted in a belief that teachers' lives are central to the curriculum of teacher education. It would situate the process of learning to teach within a paradigm of reconstruction of knowledge, whereby teachers combine partly familiar knowledge through a process of composition, often in ways sensitive to context, interaction, and response (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995).

A reconceptualized curriculum would also require that we consider the lived experience children bring to the learning space. They too have narratives of experience that become visible through the stories they live and tell. Before even engaging with the prescribed curriculum, it is important for teachers to attend to the personal practical knowledge children bring to the learning space. As they open up to this knowledge, they can begin to engage in a process of negotiating a curriculum of lives (Huber & Clandinin, 2005) that takes into account the child's lived reality as well as their own.

Service Learning in a Re-conceptualized Teacher Education Curriculum

Thinking about curriculum in the context of intersecting lives (Huber & Clandinin, 2005) helps me understand how I, as a teacher educator, need to shape spaces for preservice teachers to learn about diversity. As was pointed out in Chapter 2, learning about diversity is a complex undertaking, which can no more be accomplished in the university classroom alone than it can be solely through school-based teaching practice. We are cautioned against pushing towards a formalized curriculum of culture that treats cultural knowledge as “mere objects of history and contemporary issues” (Archibald, 1995, p. 353). Furthermore, placing such a curriculum in the hands of teachers who lack the background knowledge required to share it, might well succeed only in humiliating those towards whom the curriculum aims to build respect and understanding (Téllez, 2004). Nor is it helpful for schools of education to attempt to address cultural matters by focusing on instructional methods that purport to meet the needs of culturally different groups presenting different learning styles (Téllez, 2004). The diverse ways in which each of my participants engaged with diversity convinces me that new spaces have to be imagined if we are to succeed in creating learning experiences to address the complex process of identity formation in relation to diversity.

Based on this study, I would agree with Téllez (2002) that “cultural knowledge is best shared in informal, casual and more intimate settings where the pressure of formal teaching and testing concerns are absent” (p. 25). What is needed, I believe, is for a new space to be created within the teacher education curriculum; one which is situated neither in the theory-based university classroom nor in the practice-based field experience classroom. A new borderland space needs to be opened up separate from these two traditional learning contexts which are currently permeated by prescribed curricular outcomes and evaluation. I consider the service learning context created for this study to be such a borderland space because it provided an opportunity for preservice teachers to inquire into diversity in a setting far removed from such concerns. As a non-threatening, relationship-based reflective learning experience, I believe it provided a setting conducive to the difficult work of inquiring into personal beliefs, values, and identity formation. As preservice teachers inquire into their lives as they intersect with those of children from diverse backgrounds, it is my hope that rather than learn about diversity by focusing objectively on aspects of it, they will come to understand it holistically, that is to say in the context of whole lives of which racial, cultural, linguistic, social, or ability-related differences are a part. As a future teacher educator, I intend to use service learning in community sites as a way to intentionally *create, inquire into,* and *connect* curricular moments through which preservice teachers can learn to understand their own lived experience as well as those of children with whom their lives will intersect in the classroom.

Creating Curricular Moments

As a re-imagined borderland space, service learning would create a new context of engagement in which preservice teachers could get to know children differently from the way they might have known them based on their prior family experience and from the way they will probably engage them as students in future practicum placements. Locating this new form of field experience in a community setting between home and school allows preservice teachers access to diverse children's whole lives; that is to say that it provides an opportunity for them to interact with children, not as students in school, but as children in the informal context of their everyday lives. They can see the cultural and social realities that have shaped who the children are becoming, critical information that is often kept out of view on school landscapes. As they discover children's lived experience in relation to their own, they will experience moments of surprise and discomfort which can be understood as curricular moments (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), when narratives of experience bump together. It is these moments that hold the promise of growth in refocusing preservice teachers' attention on their knowledge with respect to diversity and their lives in relation to it. By situating a field experience in the community, service learning opens up a borderland space that blurs the boundaries between theory and practice, which are too often referred to as disconnected domains of knowledge to be 'received' in succession. In my re-imagined borderland space, the curricular focus would be on teacher knowledge in a way that would allow for knowledge of diversity to be explored experientially.

Inquiring Into Curricular Moments in Relationship

While the study of culture is best left to anthropologists (Téllez, 2004), educators need to attend closely to cultural knowledge. One way to achieve this is to help prospective teachers study curricular moments. A second aspect of my re-imagined borderland space for learning about diversity would involve the opportunity to explore curricular moments in relationship. Recognizing the need to be present to hear the triggers that lead to dispositioning moments, I would place preservice teachers in pairs or groups of three for their service learning placement. More is needed, however, than simply to be there. Curricular moments need not only to be witnessed; the tensions they create need to be explored by going back to being there. For this reason, weekly off-site conversations in small and large groups would constitute an important second aspect of the service learning experience. Field notes[16] would be encouraged as a way to focus reflective conversation on curricular moments encountered in the service learning sites. Preservice teachers could return together to curricular moments through their field notes, addressing the overlaps and gaps through sustained conversations that lead towards new understandings. To create a new story, preservice teachers need to feel a sense of belonging to a responsive relational community (Steeves & McKenzie Robblee, unpublished), to feel connected to people with whom they share common interests, trust, and compassion. I felt my participants were able to create a relational response community together.

In order to ensure that students feel comfortable inquiring into their experiences, it would be important that the service learning experience remain a non-graded component of a foundational course exploring issues of diversity. It is hard to imagine how students can effectively engage in inquiry if they must remain within competitive grading systems.

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[16] I have come to believe in the educational potential of field notes for preservice teachers over journals which, in my experience as a field experience university facilitator, tend to replicate practice rather than contribute to knowledge construction.

Connecting Curricular Moments over Time

Attending to knowledge of diversity as it evolves over time is a third aspect of the borderland space in my re-imagined curriculum. We are, in important ways, what situations pull out of us (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) and as this study showed, new knowledge can be dispositioned just as old knowledge can be. There is a need, therefore, to connect curricular moments so that preservice teachers can see not only who they are at particular moments in time but also who they are becoming over time. For this reason, I would situate the service learning field experience early on in the teacher education program as a way to engage reflection on personal identity before professional concerns come to the forefront. This would allow for exploration of issues of identity to become visible away from considerations of methods and management. I would hope that an early field experience in service learning would bring to the surface threads of inquiry preservice teachers would attend to through subsequent years of their teacher education program. Such an integrated approach might begin to address the complexity of learning about diversity and the process of living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories in relation to it, as it was made evident through the uncertain learning journeys experienced by my participants.

From Preservice to Practice: Maintaining Connections

It is my hope that learning to inquire into curricular moments during teacher education will create a mindset that will have impact beyond the teacher education program. Threads of inquiry brought forward in teacher education can be kept alive in the context of practicing teachers' lives if they go on to create their own spaces for continuing to inquire and learn from curricular moments. Inquiry then would become much more than a question to explore for a research paper or a course; it would become a way of life. This is necessary if teachers are to learn to compose a teaching life, not just for the immediate future, but also for the long term. The educational landscape is continually shifting and, sadly, there are far too many young teachers leaving the profession after very few years in the classroom. The transition from teacher education student to teacher is problematic; little wonder when we consider the way teachers are often educated for certainty. As transmitters of knowledge, they are destined to wage an ongoing battle with futility as they attempt to stay ahead of an ever-changing prescribed curriculum on a changing educational landscape. Helping prospective teachers understand that curricular change is only one aspect of a vision of curriculum that encompasses teacher and student lives, milieu, and subject matter (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992) is the foundation of successful pre-service and in-service teacher development.

A reimagined curriculum would focus on educating teachers, not for certainty, but rather for inquiry as a process of drawing together strands of connection, weaving together theory and practice to reach its educational potential (Lyons, 1998). Building one's identity is a fluid and improvisational process and respecting the idea of learning to teach as an ongoing process of becoming opens up possibilities for composing a teaching life on a shifting educational landscape (Vinz, 1996). This is possible if teacher education has helped prospective teachers learn to approach tensions they encounter as curricular moments, inquire into them, and accept a measure of ambiguity and uncertainty that leads to educative possibilities. I believe this is Vinz's (1997) intent when she speaks of learning how to *un-know* and *not-know* as new forms of literacy for teacher education.

"The origin of the word *attend* is the Latin *tendere*—to stretch. *Attend* means to extend, to stretch toward" (Maté, 1999, p. 323). If we are to attend to diversity in teacher education, then we must stretch the curriculum in ways that will focus on disposition to diversity for both current and future landscapes. I believe this must involve creating a curriculum of inquiry that begins with preservice teachers exploring their own identities. Opening up a space for service learning is a very important part of launching that curriculum. This study showed that when it is carefully structured, service learning offers the possibility of studying curricular moments in spaces that attend to the complexity of identity formation and diversity in context, across relationship, and over time. From there, as students move through different contexts across university, school classrooms, and home, they will be awake to the threads of their own stories lived and told and engage in a ongoing process of knowledge construction/reconstruction by combining and recombining partly familiar things.

Pointing Beyond

At the beginning of my doctoral journey, I was drawn to the idea of learning about others by border crossing (Giroux, 1992). This was how I understood my own experience of coming to know diversity had taken place. What I have come to realize through this study is that temporary contact with diversity, whatever form it takes, is not enough to create responsiveness and shift one's knowing of it. What is needed is to remain engaged with diversity long enough to awaken to the other's reality as well as to one's own in relation to the other. Remaining in a borderland between cultures is critical for learning to negotiate a way of being together. The borderland offers a space where identities come together and learn to negotiate shared understandings and new meanings. In this space where identities come together and meanings are negotiated, a consciousness is achieved that tolerates ambiguity and sustains contradictions. I believe this was evident in all four participants' stories.

This study helped me understand a second aspect of the borderland metaphor as Anzaldúa (1999) understands it. She believes consciousness towards the other is reflected in choosing to exercise 'one's ability to respond' to or on behalf of the other. From this perspective, the borderland signifies not only an in-between space in which to engage the other, but also the potential for creating a sense of agency in self and others. This, I believe, is a critical dimension of the work that needs to be done to prepare teachers for the diversity they will encounter in classrooms today. Not only do teachers need to change and grow, they also have a role to help their students change and grow. This means they must learn to shift the social narrative of the class as needed to ensure that every child can find his or her place in a learning community. All four participants' knowledge of diversity and themselves in relation to diversity shifted over time and these shifts were expressed in their words and actions. Monique and Thea, for example, learned not just to tell but also to live a new story as they spoke of how they saw themselves engaging with children and their families in the future. Jorane and Aurora both began to wonder about their ability to remain in relationship with children and families, should their future school environment not reflect either a sense of social justice or sufficient structure and control. The journey each participant traveled to reach that point makes it very clear that while it may seem easy to tell a new story, living a new story is harder and takes time.

Regardless of the direction subsequent shifts took for the participants, once they were awakened to their own stories, participants could not ignore them. As I consider how each of my participants will go on to live and tell new stories I am drawn to the idea of researching how the knowledge of diversity constructed within this study shifts once participants move into their own classrooms. What will happen to this knowledge, I wonder, once their preservice experience ends and they move into the classroom as beginning teachers? Bearing in mind what I have learned of the importance of learning in relationship, I would like to explore using overlapping field notes as a way to track their evolving knowledge over time and across contexts. Other directions to pursue would include exploring how beginning teachers might build community for the purpose of continuing to inquire into curricular moments and continuing to grow.

Future research directions with preservice teachers would revolve around understanding how to ensure an intensive service learning experience for a whole class of preservice teachers without losing the sense of intimacy and trust that was such an important part of exploring disposition to diversity in this study. Recognizing the importance of situating learning spaces in informal contexts, might a course be developed that would allow for an inquiry-based service learning experience extending over the course of an academic year? Might preservice teachers be taught to use overlapping field notes as reflective tools to inquire into their knowledge of diversity both on- and off-site? Might ways be found for community partners to participate in the inquiry-based service learning field experience? And, given such partnerships, how might issues of assessment be addressed in ways that would meet university requirements without compromising the service learning experience for preservice teachers. Finally, once this course becomes a reality, how might continued learning across subsequent teacher education years be achieved as a way to respect the ‘overtimeness’ of knowledge construction/reconstruction?

This study opens up questions I find both challenging and compelling as a beginning educational researcher. As I move into my research program, I plan to adopt a Deweyan stance, letting philosophy lead to change and changing structures. I welcome the opportunities I see before me of opening up a borderland space in teacher education, of composing educative spaces for prospective teachers to explore their narrative histories in relation to diversity, and helping them, in turn, learn to open up borderland spaces both in and out of their future classrooms in which to negotiate a curriculum of lives.

EPILOGUE

Dear Monique, Thea, Jorane and Aurora,

I began this last chapter poised on a threshold, considering with a mixture of excitement and trepidation, the career that awaits me as a teacher educator and educational researcher. Do you remember what it was like for us when we first crossed the threshold of our research sites? How bravely you followed me there when all I had been able to promise you was that we were about to embark on a learning adventure together. And what an adventure it turned out to be! So much so that I find myself, once again, struggling to find the words with which to close this chapter. It is hard to put an end to this learning journey that began just over two years ago.

As we read your chapters together, each of you confirmed things you'd always known about yourself. You also discovered new ones. You showed such courage as you took on the challenge of reconsidering some long-held beliefs and assumptions you carried in relation to diversity. At the beginning of your student teaching, Monique, when you wrote to tell me how proud you were that a young Aboriginal student in your class had approached you for help, I knew something in you had changed because of your service learning. I saw how you were incorporating these changes into your developing identity as a teacher. You had learned not only to tell a different story in respect of Aboriginal children, but also to live it. I take heart knowing that you are continuing to do so in your own practice. When I heard you speak, Thea, about your intention to reach out to immigrant parents, I knew you had grown in your understanding of the need to consider children's lived experience as you compose your life as a teacher. Aurora, I *admire the hard questions you are asking about composing your place on the educational landscape. You've always been so certain of yourself as a leader of children, yet through your service learning experience, you've seen the possibilities that can be opened up when you let yourself meet children at their level. I know this will make a difference to the way you negotiate a way of being with children, no matter the circumstances. And Jorane, through your lived experience, you came to this study already awake to diversity. You've always found your place in environments reflecting social justice concerns and I hope you will continue to do so. I hope that you will find a way to shape learning spaces on your own terms in educational environments that are not always friendly to such issues. I thank you for your quiet presence. You've also taught me the importance of attending to voice when working in relationship with others.*

The insights drawn from this study are precious; I thank you for them and for the privilege of learning alongside you. Thank you for putting your trust in me that day and letting me be part of your lives. Thanks to you, I too am seeing the world differently today. The profound sense of dis-ease with which this project started has made way for a sense of hope and possibility. I had a feeling things could be different and you've helped me understand what I need to do to make them so. I can now imagine a different future and I know you too are imagining yourselves differently from the way you did when we first met. I am excited to think about how your knowledge will continue to evolve as you compose your life as teachers in and out of your own classrooms.

Thank you for your stories. They have helped me understand my own story. Thank you for the contribution each of your stories and mine will make to the larger story of *teacher education for diversity. Thanks to you and this study, I have the confidence to move forward as a teacher educator—I know the kinds of borderland spaces I need to open up. As you continue to compose your life, may you also continue to open up borderland spaces that allow you to see possibilities within others and within yourselves in relation to others. As I conclude this dissertation, I offer it to you as an invitation to other preservice teachers to imagine how the world might be different.*

With heartfelt thanks,
Claire

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